Learning Frameworks: Theory to Practice.

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Interactivity 2016
Why Frameworks?

Peter Crabbe Ed.D.
Chief Program Officer
Kidspace Children’s Museum

Interactivity 2016
Structure, Clarity, and Creativity
Diversity and Organic Change
Establishing an Organization’s Uniqueness AND Place in the Greater Landscape

**Flow**: Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

- Signs of Being in a State of “Flow”
- (1) You lose awareness of time
- (2) You aren’t thinking about yourself
- (3) You aren’t interrupted by extraneous thoughts
- (4) You are active
- (5) You work effortlessly
Frameworks Shouldn’t Feel Like This!
Scaffolding and Supporting
Frameworks: Scale
Frameworks for Filtering
Frameworks Help to Focus Growth
Practical Tools

Tracking Progress

When Things Don’t Go as Planned.
When Things look Good on the Surface but Don’t Match Up.
What are we at Kidspace Thinking About?

- Kidspace Experience Development Framework
  - Desired Results/Outcomes
    - Understandings and Big Ideas
  - Evidence of Outcomes
  - Experience Plan

- Big Ideas
  - Refers to core concepts, principles, and theories….
  - Organizes large bodies of factual information into categories
  - Transfers to new fields of study and new situations
  - Is abstract, requiring investigation to probe its implications
Permanent Facility Opened May 1, 2015

After ten years of planning, opening weekend was celebrated by more than 3,000 visitors
One of the Busiest Museums in Greater MN

- 100,000 visits in first 12 months
- Nearly 2,800 member families
- More than 10% of visits are free or reduced admissions
Depth and Reach

- Visitors arriving from:
  - 31 US States
  - 64 Minnesota Counties
- 53,000: Mankato, North Mankato Population
**Grow Sustainably**

**HISTORICAL TIMELINE**

- **2005** – Co-Founders, Linda Frost and Mary Jo Hensel, begin initial planning and research
- **2006** – First board meeting; establishment of the Museum’s non-profit status
- **2009 – 2014** – Operating three successive prototype spaces
- **2012** – State of Minnesota awards the first installment of Legacy Funding
- **2014** – Beginning of building renovations and exhibit fabrications
- **May 1 & 2, 2015** – Grand Opening of the Children’s Museum of Southern Minnesota
Critical Planning Documents

- Environmental Scan
- Feasibility Study
- Learning Experience Master Plan
  - Including Learning Framework
- Business Plan
- Strategic Plan
Learning Experience Master Plan

Components

• Learning Framework
• Exhibit Experience Approach
• Gallery Concepts
Developmental Roadmap

**Research and Preparation**

- Activities
  - Outreach tour
  - Traveling exhibits
  - Planning Team discussions
  - Museum tours

**Outcome**

Shared information about activities and experiences that are engaging to CMSM visitors and compatible with CMSM and the community.

**Activities and Steps: Building CMSM’s Learning Framework**

- Gather, distill, and prioritize information and ideas.
- Identify broad questions about audience, learning, and experience to answer through Play Lab.
- Identify promising Play Lab activities to answer questions.
- Gather information (through observations, interactive surveys, etc.) from Play Lab to answer questions.

**Outcome**

Promising ideas about audience, learning, and experience to test with visitors to Play Lab.

**Play Lab**

- **Activities and Steps: Completing CMSM’s Learning Framework**
  - Assess and interpret results of Play Lab observations and surveys.
  - Articulate Learning Approach for all museum experiences.
  - Complete Learner Profile
  - Identify Focus Areas.
  - Compose Learning Experience Goals for exhibits, programs and outreach
  - Characterize experiential spirit & style.

**Outcome**

CMSM Learning Framework that consolidates its learning interests across all its offerings.

**New Exhibits**

- **Exhibit Planning and Production Steps**
  - Exhibit Experience Approach
  - Concept Development
  - Preliminary Plan & Design
  - Final Plan & Design
  - Bid/negotiation
  - Fabrication & Installation
  - Remediation

**Outcome**

Interactive exhibits aligned with the museum’s mission, vision and values that meet high expectations for engagement, safety, and durability.
A Learning Framework is a strong set of foundational ideas consistent with a museum’s driving principles such as its mission, vision, and values. A Framework translates these ideas into a platform to guide planning and evaluation of all learning experiences including exhibits, programs, interpretation, etc. It focuses, sets priorities, creates emphasis and defines key relationships for concentrating the museum’s learning interests on exemplary learning experiences.

Typical elements of a Learning Framework:

- **Learning Purpose** defines a museum’s broad learning aspirations.
- **Learning Principles** emerge from the Learning Purpose and address the basic conditions that support learning, particularly in informal learning settings. They are grounded in child development, learning theory, and research.
- **Learner Profile** summarizes important information about segments within the entire audience, based on significant characteristics (such as age) that must be addressed to make progress towards the Learning Purpose.
- **Cornerstones** help define the territory from which a museum will draw topics and subjects to explore in its exhibits and programs. They reflect an organization’s mission and Learning Purpose and designate how it intends to distinguish itself from other organizations serving the same audience, produce significant learning value for the community, and build internal capacity.
- **Impacts** highlight where a museum hopes to make positive contributions to the lives of the children and adults it serves and to the community.
- **Learning Experience Goals** define what an organization hopes to accomplish through its primary learning experiences.
- **Spirit and Style** express the personality of exhibit and program experiences and is consistent with the Learning Purpose and Learning Focus.

An **Exhibit Experience Approach** highlights the nature of the experience that is central to the rich set of exhibit experiences a museum will create for children, their parents, caregivers, grandparents, and teachers.

- **Experience Builders** are important experiences that all children in a museums age range, regardless of background, should enjoy regularly with family, friends, and peers.
- **Play Conditions** are factors in the physical and social environment a museum can vary to enable, encourage, and extend children’s play and exploration.
- **Experience Thread** is an overarching image or concept that often imperceptibly unifies and brings coherence to a wide range of activities and experiences across multiple exhibits or galleries.
**Gallery Typology**

A place to read, share or discover stories

- **Story Threads**
- **Tod Pods**
- **Local, Found & Natural**
- **Parents @ Play**

Evidence of community input and contributions

- Props, opportunities, and messages for parents to engage in play

A small area or activity appropriate for very young children

Objects and materials that are old, found, natural and locally meaningful

**Play = Possibilities**

Connect galleries with different interpretations of this thread.
Thorough Audience Description

**Primary audiences, served most fully and continuously:**
- All children 9 years and under
- Family groups
- Regions: Blue Earth, Le Sueur and Nicollet county

**Secondary audiences, served well and episodically:**
- Children 9 - 12 years old
- School and community groups
- Parents, teachers, caregivers
- Regions: Southern Minnesota

**Emerging audiences - served well and through targeted offerings:**
- Children 12 - 15 years old
- Children and families underserved by play opportunities
- Regions: Minnesota and Northern Iowa
# A Shared Understanding of Learning

## Learning Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPERIENTIAL SPIRIT &amp; STYLE</th>
<th>ENGAGING</th>
<th>ENRICHING</th>
<th>CREATIVE</th>
<th>IMAGINATIVE</th>
<th>AUTHENTIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEARNING EXPERIENCE GOALS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Create irresistible, interactive experiences and environments that activate the learning and well-being benefits of play.</td>
<td>Get everyone into the act with play.</td>
<td>Make play and its value matter to children, parents, teachers, and the community.</td>
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</tbody>
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## IMPACTS

- Children who have enjoyed abundant play opportunities, are excited to learn, and have experienced success in a variety of settings.
- Families that play and learn together and with other families.
- Teachers who recognize the importance of play in reaching and teaching all children.
- The Museum recognized as a reliable source of information on the value of play.
- A community that understands the importance of early play and learning experiences in the lives of its children and its own future.
# A Shared Understanding of Learning

## Cornerstones
- Building relationships
- Investigating the world
- Exploring creativity
- Connecting with nature
- Experiencing well-being

## Learners
Learners who are: social, active, curious, creative, and responsive
Children ten years and under, their parents, caregivers, and teachers

## Learning Purpose
Make the joy and value of play, and its connections to learning and well-being, visible to children, parents, teachers, and the community.

## Vision
The Children’s Museum of Southern Minnesota is the catalyst for building a stronger, more vibrant community around play so that all children in our region share in a bright future of opportunity and well-being.

## Mission
Ignite the natural curiosity of every child through the power of play in a dynamic, awe-inspiring environment.
Learning Framework Today

• Aligning Learning Framework engagement with:
  • Strategic Plan implementation
  • Values development
  • Professional development
  • Play work training
  • Play observations
Asking the Questions:

• How can we be more valuable to the learning community?
• What is the community’s view of learning at the Museum?
• Do we ALL have a shared understanding of learning?
• How does our Learning Framework aid our mission and vision?
Providence Children’s Museum
Learning Frameworks

Robin Meisner & Suzy Letourneau
The mission of Providence Children's Museum is to inspire and celebrate learning through active play and exploration.

serving children ages 1 to 11 and their adult caregivers

Audience

- 161,068 visitors in 2015
- 30% welcomed free of charge
- 24% of visits by 2,124 member families
- Most (90%) visit in family groups
- Children’s ages: 1 or 2 (31%), 3 or 4 (30%), 5 to 8 (30%), 9 and up (7%)
- Average age of child: 4.3 years
Re-examining Learning Frameworks

1977
Children’s Museum opens in Pawtucket, RI

1978/79
Staff defines learning philosophy – children learn through play

1997
Relocates to downtown Providence, tripling size; learning philosophy updated

2008
Play Power exhibit opens; play advocacy begins

2013
Research – how do children learn through play?

2014 – Present
Learning frameworks updated to clearly define beliefs about play and its connection to learning
Why Re-Examining the Learning Frameworks?

The need
- To update and further develop existing Educational Philosophy
- To clearly articulate our shared beliefs about play and learning, and what evidence supports these views

Goals
- Build a sense of ownership of the philosophy among staff
- Develop a shared language about play and learning to inform our practices and communicate more clearly with visitors
- Understand what the Museum can provide to support both play and learning, improving the visitor experience
The messy process of thinking together

updating the learning frameworks
Many, many drafts...
Learning is…

- **Experiential**: based on personal, active and multisensory experiences
- **Dynamic**: building on itself and changing over time and across development
- **Physical**: Involving physical actions and experiences
- **Social**: Shaped by interactions with others
- **Emotional**: Shaped by feelings, motivations, and interests
- **Cultural**: Shaped by cultural contexts and values

All of these aspects of learning are interrelated and impact one another.
Connections between exploration, play and learning

**Play:** Freely-chosen, personally-directed, intrinsically motivated and involves active engagement

**Exploration:** Intentionally gathering information about the world using all the senses

The Museum recognizes the connections between exploration, play and learning, and acknowledges that playing and learning are processes that share many characteristics.

By providing an environment that is supportive of children’s play and exploration, the Museum also supports children’s learning.
What the Museum provides to support exploration, play and learning

**Three integral parts of Museum experiences**
Exhibits and environments • Programs, including those offsite • Facilitation

**Defining features of Museum experiences**
Each experience does not necessarily address every feature listed here, but as whole, experiences across the Museum consider and incorporate the following characteristics.

- Child-centered
- Active
- Sensory
- Tangible
- Familiar & unexpected
- Developmentally meaningful
- Choice
- Challenge
- Social support
- Time and space
- Aesthetics
- Making learning visible
- Thoughtful & respectful
Outcomes for learners at the Museum (*in progress*)

As a result of their experiences, Museum learners...

- *Play, explore and learn in many different ways.*
- *Are inspired, engaged and motivated* – by the environment, by others and by pursuing their own ideas and interests.
- *Express their creativity and individuality.*
- *Make connections* – building on prior knowledge and experiences.
- *Think of themselves as learners* – reflecting on their ideas and perceiving themselves as active and capable learners.
- *Feel respected, safe and comfortable.*
- *Are respectful* – of themselves, other people and the world around them.
Next Steps: Using the Frameworks

- Continuing to clarify the Outcomes for Learners
- Sharing drafts internally for feedback, working toward a common language among staff
- Developing training and assessment tools for frontline staff
- Developing assessment tools for programs
- Conducting Museum-wide exhibit assessment and future planning
- Developing messaging for adults about children’s play and learning