Teaching or Learning?
Defining museum education in your museum

Susan Diachisin, Museum Education Supervisor
Kristin Gallas, Project Manager for Education Development
What does it mean to do museum education in the 21st c.?
How do you know your museum is providing quality informal learning experiences for student audiences?
The Experiential Learning Project at the Tsongas Industrial History Center
Why we embarked on this project ...
goals

1. Define a common vocabulary and understanding of what TIHC does, and how we do it

2. Reflect on our practice and codify principles that will help us develop and evaluate programs and activities

3. Create an observation tool to assist with the coaching and development of staff
The mission of the Tsongas Industrial History Center is to inspire connections with and understandings about America’s industrial past, present, and future through *experiential learning* using Lowell’s unique resources.
your turn

What is your mission statement?

What language in it sets the educational values for your museum?
process

1. Crowd source definitions of “experiential learning” from all staff

2. Sort and categorize definitions
your turn

1. Crowd source definitions
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING
at the Tsongas Industrial History Center is ...

ACTIVE
Learners engage through hands-on activities and simulations.

MINDS-ON
Learners connect intellectually with content and build deeper understandings.

COLLABORATIVE
Learners unite through dialogue, by working together, and sharing authority.

AFFECTIVE
Learners reflect and make emotional connections.

SENSORY
Learners immerse themselves in the historic resources and natural environment.

FUN
Learners have the freedom to play and be creative.

INSPIRATIONAL
Learners feel empowered toward action thinking, agency, and stewardship.
your turn

2. Sort and categorize definitions
process

3. Generate list of evidence of what student behavior might look or sound like for each category

4. Generate list of evidence of what staff might do to foster that student behavior
process

Observe programs to generate list of evidence
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active: learners engage through hands-on materials and simulations</th>
<th>what student behavior might look or sound like?</th>
<th>what is the Museum Teacher/Ranger might do to foster that behavior?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Follows instructions by doing task</td>
<td>Presents clear goals of activity</td>
<td>• Presents clear goals of activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads, talks, draws, and/or handles materials respectfully</td>
<td>Provide clear verbal instructions</td>
<td>• Provide clear verbal instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically moves towards the focal point of the activity</td>
<td>Models use of materials, tools and equipment</td>
<td>• Models use of materials, tools and equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking closely at resources</td>
<td>Gestures and points to reference images in the space to help clarify content and context</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on presenter and answers questions</td>
<td>Coaches and interacts with students individually or in small groups</td>
<td>• Coaches and interacts with students individually or in small groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying focused during the whole activity/Comfortably moves around between materials and work areas</td>
<td>Asks students appropriate questions to ensure they are actively doing, looking, and listening</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing and trying their work or is persistent with task</td>
<td>Setting context for activity by sharing a story that makes activity have relevance</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing and handing materials and tools back and forth</td>
<td>Gives students autonomy on how they work on tasks</td>
<td>• Gives students autonomy on how they work on tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expresses physical pleasure and generates a “buzz of energy”</td>
<td>Scaffolds students on tasks by chunking content and instructions</td>
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</tr>
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your turn

3. Generate list of evidence of what student behavior might look or sound like for each category
your turn

4. Generate list of evidence of what staff might do to foster that student behavior
lessons learned

- it’s collaborative
- process not product
- improved communications
- revealed holes in programs
- helped define our expectations of staff
- helped us see the presence (or absence) fun
where we are now ...

• Current status of the observation tool

• Assessment of current activities

• Development of new activities
**Tool**

**Active:** Learners engage through hands-on materials and simulations.

<table>
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<th>What does the student behavior look or sound like?</th>
<th>What is the Museum Teacher/Ranger doing to foster that behavior?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Follows instructions</td>
<td>▪ Presents clear goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Reads, talks, draws, uses materials respectfully</td>
<td>▪ Provide clear verbal instructions</td>
</tr>
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<td>▪ Stays focused</td>
<td>▪ Asks appropriate questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Comfortably moves around</td>
<td>▪ Sets context by sharing a relevant story</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Tests or is persistent with task</td>
<td>▪ Gives students autonomy</td>
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<td>▪ Shares materials and tools</td>
<td>▪ chunking content and instructions</td>
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<td>▪ Expresses physical pleasure</td>
<td></td>
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reflection

What do you think about this process?

How would it work at your museum/site?
Questions?

Susan Diachisin, Tsongas Industrial History Center
Susan_Diachisin@uml.edu

Kristin Gallas, Tsongas Industrial History Center
Kristin_gallas@uml.edu