Creating a Learning Framework: How to Get Started

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Where do you fit?

My museum:

- a. uses a learning framework, and I feel like I could share our approach with others.
- b. has a learning framework, but we want to make it better.
- c. has a recently developed learning framework, and we’re just learning how to apply it.
- d. wants to develop a learning framework, and I’m here to learn more.
- e. what’s a learning framework?
- f. other
Children’s Museum Research Network (CMRN) – funded by an award from the Institute of Museum and Library Services

http://childrensmuseums.org/childrens-museum-research-network
Recent activity around learning frameworks

Museum Notes........  10 Lessons from Learning Frameworks (blog post)  
https://goo.gl/T89kay

Interactivity 2016..... Learning Frameworks: Theory into Practice (session)  
https://goo.gl/slPwHK

Hand to Hand.........  *How Learning Frameworks reflect Learning Theory in the Museum Field* (article)  
*Learning Frameworks Decoded: What the can tell us about a museum* (article)  
Spring 2016 issue

Informal Science...... Analyzing Learning Frameworks in Children’s Museums (blog post)  
https://goo.gl/mxeCPx
Activity 1 of 3

At your table, please do a round of introductions with each person telling what experience, if any, they have with learning frameworks.

As you share, if your museum has a learning framework, please share 2 key points about it.

When everyone is finished, take a few minutes to draft a working definition of a learning framework to share back with the larger session.

Please pick a person to share your group definition.
What is your table’s definition of a Learning Framework?
What is a learning framework?
Aligns with a museum’s mission, vision, and goals.

States the value of the museum to the community or learner...

By articulating what the museum values.
Clarifies how the museum understands learning.

As we’ll see in the story of DuPage, this is a process. An ongoing conversation about purpose, audience, activities, and outcomes.
Provides a foundation for all educational activities.

Guides planning and evaluation of activities.

Not just for museum educators!
The CMRN’s review of five museums’ learning frameworks revealed:
• Each reflected the institution's values and beliefs about learning.
• Grounded in a specific context.
• Just one perspective, not the only or the best perspective.
At your table, you have a brief description and the learning frameworks from our three museums:

- Children’s Museum of Houston
- DuPage Children’s Museum
- The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis

Look through these example learning frameworks and discuss their similarities and differences. We’ve provided a handout to guide the discussion.

After about 15 minutes, we’ll have a discussion about what the groups talked about, what you noticed, and what made you curious.
Activity 2 Shareout

What questions were raised?

What observations did you have?
Developing a Learning Framework at the DuPage Children’s Museum
## DCM’s Timeline for Developing the Learning Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Task</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 2016</td>
<td>Proposed the idea of developing a learning framework to leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2016</td>
<td>Convened first meeting with planning team to discuss the process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer/Fall 2016</td>
<td>Completed data collection</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 2016</td>
<td>Meeting with planning team to review data collected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2017</td>
<td>Draft language of learning framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2017</td>
<td>Two meetings to work on draft language and visual representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2017</td>
<td>Reviewed learning framework and supporting definitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 11, 2017</td>
<td>Meeting scheduled to finalize learning framework and supporting definitions</td>
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</tbody>
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ACM Research Network

The ACM Research Network’s first special interest group is focused on learning frameworks.

Five partner children’s museums presented their frameworks and were interviewed regarding their process for development, implementation, utility, and review of the frameworks.

While there is tremendous variability in what the frameworks look like across institutions, the structures reflect the beliefs and practices of the institutions as well as guide decision making for exhibits and programming.
Learning Framework

• Structures that articulate the beliefs and goals of an organization

• The framework should:
  • “Identify the phenomenon of interest”
  • “key premises or assumptions underlying the framework”
    • (Crossan, Lane, & White, 1999, p. 523)

• The framework provides a guide for the organization in terms of expectations, decision making, and planning.
Sample Framework

Source: http://deesnursery.co.uk/children/learning/
Providence Children’s Museum (PCM)

• In 2014, PCM went through a process to develop their current learning framework.
• Transition from “educational philosophy” to “learning framework”
• “Required staff to reconcile their individual beliefs with evidence from research” (p. 10).
• Explored definitions of learning and play
• Interviewed parents and caregivers about their perceptions of children’s play and learning
• Findings informed family focused programming, the development of research, and exhibit design.
Providence Children’s Museum (PCM)

“The research-based implementation of the new learning frameworks will ideally give museum staff across departments more structure for reflecting together about their work, building on their excitement to strengthen and institution-wide culture of reflective practice.” (p. 11)

The Process

- Define the purpose
- Develop a team
- Collect relevant data
- Build the framework
- Implement the framework

Source: https://mindtools.com/pages/article/newISS_91.htm
## Plan for Developing the Learning Framework

### Inputs:
- Museum
- School programs
- Community outreach
- Professional development
- Advocacy

### Activities:
- **Potential Data Collection:**
  - Staff interviews
  - Parent/ caregiver focus groups
  - Document reviews
  - Child interviews on the floor (post-it interviews)
  - Administration/ board member interviews

### People:
- Children
- Educators/ chaperones
- Parent/ grandparent/ caregiver
- Volunteers
- Staff
- Board
- Community partners

### Available Data:
- Past studies
- Educational Philosophy documents

### Outputs:
- **Goals:**
  - Report to document process
  - Establishment of a learning framework model by the fall

- **Key Questions:**
  - Who are the museum’s learners?
  - How do they learn?
  - Why do we think that learning happens this way?
  - What kinds of experiences does the museum provide to support learning?

- **Defining concepts:**
  - Adult/ child partnerships
  - STEAM
  - Constructivist philosophy
Summer Data Collection: Who Did We Talk To?

• Interviews with DCM administration

• Feedback from DCM’s Education Committee

• Group meeting with DCM staff

• Focus group study: Parents’ Perspectives of Play and Learning

• Ask It Board with children on the museum floor

Questions were based on:


Questions for DCM Administration, Staff, and Education Committee

Questions:
• Who are the museums’ learners?
• How do they learn?
• Why do you think learning happens this way?
• How do you know a child is learning?
• What is your definition of play?
• What is the role of play in learning?
• What kinds of experiences does the museum provide to support learning?
• How should the museum be supporting adults who support children’s learning?
• How should the museum be supporting the larger community?
• What are the most important things facing the museum over the next few years?
• What absolutely needs to be included in DCM’s learning framework?

Questions for the Parent Focus Group

Questions about Play:
• What is your definition of play?
• Why do you think children play?
• What does your child do to play?
• Where does your child play?
• How are you or other people involved in your child’s play?

Questions about Learning:
• What is your definition of learning?
• How can you tell that your child is learning?
• How important is your role in your child’s learning?
• Are there other people that support your child’s learning? If so, who?
• What do you believe about the role of play in your child’s learning?

How does the children’s museum support your child’s play and/ or learning?
What other types of experiences support your child’s play and/ or learning?
Is there anything that would add to your child’s play and/ or learning?
Ask It Board: Can you show me three things that you like to play with?
Summary of what we learned:

Who are the museum’s learners?
At the museum:
• Children and their adult partners

Through professional development and other outreach programming:
• Teachers
• Families
• Community partners

What is being learned?
• STEAM
• Critical life skills
• Social/ emotional skills
Where is learning taking place?

- In the museum
- In the community
- At home

When does learning take place?

- During children’s early years (birth to age 10)
- During visits (single or multiple)
- Pushes into home or school environments

What are some of the theories that inform the process?

- Piaget
- Vygotsky
- Reggio Emilia
- Dewey
- Bronfenbrenner
- Hirsh Pasek & Golinkoff

How does learning take place?

- Hands-on, open ended learning that promotes risk taking and multiple outcomes
- Hypothesis building
- Testing
- Observation
- Experimentation
Definitions of Play

- Child-directed
- Less structured
- Involves risk-taking
- Brings joy
- Open ended
- Not a measured outcome
- Hands on
- Problem solving
- Exploration
- Authentic
- Provoked by the environment
- Everything else is gone—place outside the rest of the world (flow state)

Definitions of Learning

- Open ended
- Playing with ideas
- Children play with their culture/humanness/understanding
- Trying out roles
- All play is learning, but not all learning is play
- Play makes learning “stick”
- Creates ownership
- Personal way of learning—individual meaning making
The learning framework should:

• Be informed by the philosophies and theories that shape DCM practices
• Embrace the history and background of the institution
• Be “nimble” in order to speak to the front line staff
• Help guide decision making (i.e. holidays, marketing, etc.)
• Be inclusive
• Match the mission of DCM
Our Mission
DuPage Children’s Museum ignites the potential of all children to learn through hands-on exploration by integrating art, math, and science.

Our Vision
A world where there is time and place for all children to reach their full, unique learning potential through hands-on play.

Our Core Beliefs
• Respect for all children and their ability to learn
• The power of play as a basis for constructing knowledge
• The importance of the child-adult learning partnership
Building the Framework

• What will be the function of the learning framework?

• How do we want to identify learning?

• What MUST be included in the learning framework?
Mission Statement: DuPage Children’s Museum ignites the potential of all children to learn through hands-on exploration by integrating art, math, and science.

DCM’s programs and exhibits strive to:

Remain innovative by informing our work through current research
Explore the intersection of art, math, and science with accurate, age-appropriate content
Promote persistent, self-directed learning and encourages risk taking and learning from failure
Create opportunities for open-ended, process oriented experiences with the potential for multiple outcome
Engage all children and their adult partners in child-led play experiences that encourage curiosity, exploration, and collaboration
Foster inclusivity for all children and their adult partners
Provide opportunities to use real tools, materials, and equipment
Be mindful of commercial intent
At your table, you’ll find the Activity 3 handout. This is a worksheet that steps you through the process DuPage used to create their learning framework.

Working by yourself or in pairs, begin to walk through the worksheet from your institution’s perspective.
Questions & Final Thoughts