PART 1:
ABOUT EMPATHY
EMPATHY + EXHIBITS
EMPATHY
+
EXHIBITS
=
CURIOSITY
CURIOSITY

- A strong desire to know or learn something
- Inquisitive interest in others’ concerns (“We”)
EMPATHY

- The feeling that you understand and share another person’s experiences and emotions
- The ability to share someone else’s feelings
EMPATHY IN DECLINE
COLLEGE STUDENTS

EMPATHY LEVEL

1979 2016

40% DROP

STEEPEST DECLINE

1979 2006 2016

LOW

HIGH

University of Michigan Institute for Social Research
EMPATHY DECLINE

CAUSES

- Information overload: numbing, desensitizing
- Social media: narcissism ("Me")
- Looking “down”: distraction, disconnection
GOOD NEWS ...
EMPATHY IS INNATE
BUT ...
INDEPENDENT THINKING
AND ...
FIERCE

COMPETITION
AND ... OUR BRAINS
RIGHT  “holistic”

LEFT  “linear”
HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO EXHIBITS?
EXHIBITS

IMAGES

WORDS
EXHIBITS

EMPATHY

CURIOSITY
EXHIBITS

EMPATHY

CURIOSITY
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EXHIBITS

"ME"

"WE"
PRACTICE CURiosity ABOUT OTHERS
PART 2: TIPS & TOOLS
DESIGNING WITH EMPATHY
DESIGN CHALLENGE

Young Kids + Local Nature + Distracted Adults
DESIGN SOLUTION

PROGRAM SPACE
DESIGN PROCESS

NATURE-INSPIRED
IDEAS

BLUE-SKY THINKING
In order to develop nature-inspired Exhibit Concepts, the Design Team spent time in the Arroyo, observing the natural environment and details. The photographs above document the Design Team's Arroyo experience and the natural objects they collected. The Design Team's observations included:

- bright green algae on the surface of still water
- tree tunnels created by willow branches
- spider webs that formed miniature hammocks
- natural cotton collecting leaf litter
- acorns and other pods
- bark patterns, both natural and human-made

Design Reference: Arroyo Walk

CONTENT RESEARCH
VISITORS BEHAVIOR PATTERNS
DESIGN

SIMPLE PROTOTYPE
As design reference for developing the Early Childhood Learning Center, the Design Team is inspired by various sources including modern sculpture, patterns in nature, international play spaces, classic designs, art installations and textile designers. Above are some of the images that inspire us.