Interdisciplinary Learning in Museums: When STEM Becomes STEAM

Advice for adding art to STEM programs and exhibits:

1. **Bring other departments in early in the process to get them invested in the project.**

   This will make the end result more successful if everyone has a stake in it. Depending on the specific organization of your Museum, building cross-departmental teams will get everyone invested in the project. The first couple of years, Tough Art was a project within the exhibits department; now it is a signature program of the Museum and speaks to who we are as an institution. For example, you can see the roots of Tough Art in the execution and development of our MakeShop.

2. **Accept the fact that ideas will not work and be OK with that. The goal is not to be perfect. A better goal is to not repeat your mistakes.**

   This is ok because you can learn valuable lessons from the misfires, mistakes and failures that can inform future projects. The projects can still be successful if the artists’ experience and the internal professional development/training opportunities are meaningful for everyone involved.

3. **Prototyping is key to success. It is worth the extra time and energy. I promise.**

   We have evidence over the years that the artists who took prototyping seriously and committed to our process had successful pieces and those who didn’t failed in on some level. To make this part of the collaboration a success, we work closely with the artists on observation techniques. We think this will help the artists in their careers. It also helps us see our Museum in new ways, opens us up to new possibilities and hones our problem solving skills.