Title: Evaluating the effectiveness of existing experiences and educational programs in the Early Start Discovery Space.

Purpose of the Research
Through focus groups with parents and caregivers of children who visit the Early Start Discovery Space (ESDS), we aim to determine which critical early learning skills are developed in children’s museums and how they are developed. We seek to understand what parents and caregivers believe their children have learnt as a result of visiting the Early Start Discovery Space and determine if children’s museums are unique in providing an environment for developing critical early learning skills. With this information, we hope to enhance the learning that occurs in the experiences and encounters beyond the children’s museum environment.

Investigators
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Method and Demands on Participants
If you choose to be involved, you will be asked to participate in a focus group run by an Early Start Researcher along with 5-7 other parent or carers of children at the Early Start Discovery Space. In these focus groups, you will be asked open-ended questions using the “Inspiring Learning for All” Framework. This Framework is based on a broad and inclusive definition of learning that states:

- Learning is a process of active engagement with experiences and collaboration with others;
- Learning is what people do when they are curious about the world around them;
- Learning involves the development of skills, knowledge, understanding, values, ideas and creativity; and
- Effective learning leads to change and empowerment and the confidence to learn more.

Information will be recorded and transcribed using pseudonyms for participants. The focus group will run for about 60 minutes.

Possible Inconveniences, Risks, and Discomforts
Focus group participation will involve attending a session at Early Start UOW for a maximum of 50 minutes (including briefing time). Refreshments will be provided as well as free parking within the Early Start building. Your involvement in the study is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation from the study at any time and withdraw any data that you have provided to that point. The decision not to participate or to withdraw from the study, will not affect any current or future relationship with the University of Wollongong or the Early Start Discovery Space. Data collected from the research will be transcribed using pseudonyms in lieu of participant names, and
stored for 5 years in room 214 of building 21 at the University of Wollongong, with access only given to the researchers mentioned above. The results will be published in an academic journal and in other Early Start promotional material.

**Funding and Benefits of the Research**
This study is entirely internally funded and has no assistance from any grants. With information obtained through focus groups with parents and caregivers, the focus groups hope to help the Early Start Discovery Space improve upon its capacity to develop critical early learning skills for children. Using feedback from those who visit the centre with their child/ren, we can determine what children are learning and how they are learning it, and emphasize or deemphasize certain experiences to cater to childhood learning. We also aim to use this information to determine which steps can be taken to improve learning both within and beyond the children’s museum environment. This experience allows caregivers like yourselves to be involved in the process for the Early Start Discovery Space to understand and create experiences that help children flourish and realise their potential.

**Ethics Review and Complaints**
This study has been reviewed by the Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Wollongong. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way this research has been conducted you can contact the UOW Ethics Officer on (02) 4221 3386 or email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au.

Thank you for your interest in helping us improving learning through play.