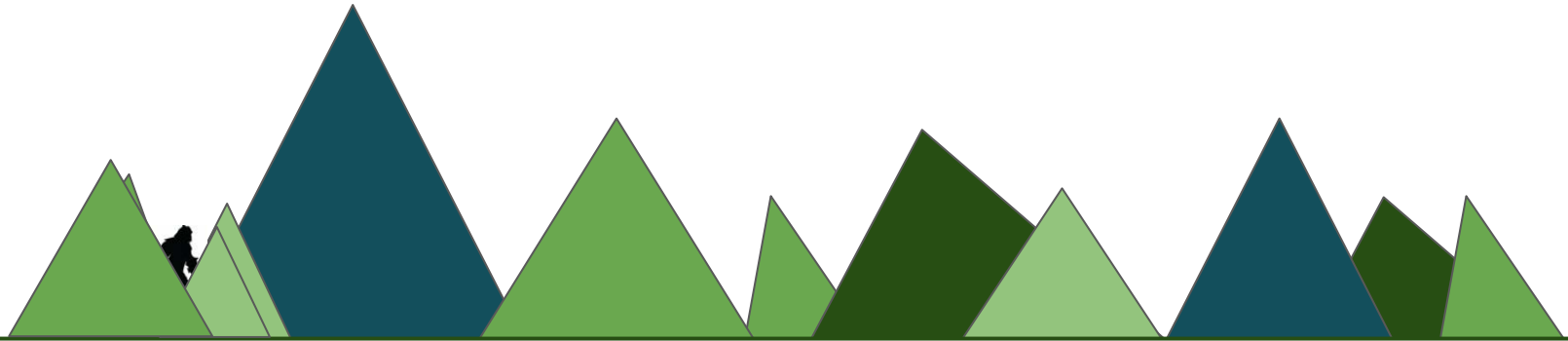


# How Rewarding is Risk?

Play, risk-taking, and building capable children



# How Rewarding is Risk?

Play, risk-taking, and building capable children

## **Alissa Rupp, FAIA, LEED**

**Architect, Exhibit Designer, Planner**

FRAME | Integrative Design Strategies (Seattle, WA)

## **Amanda Wilkening**

**Assistant Director of Visitor Engagement**

Hands On Children's Museum (Olympia, WA)

## **Putter Bert**

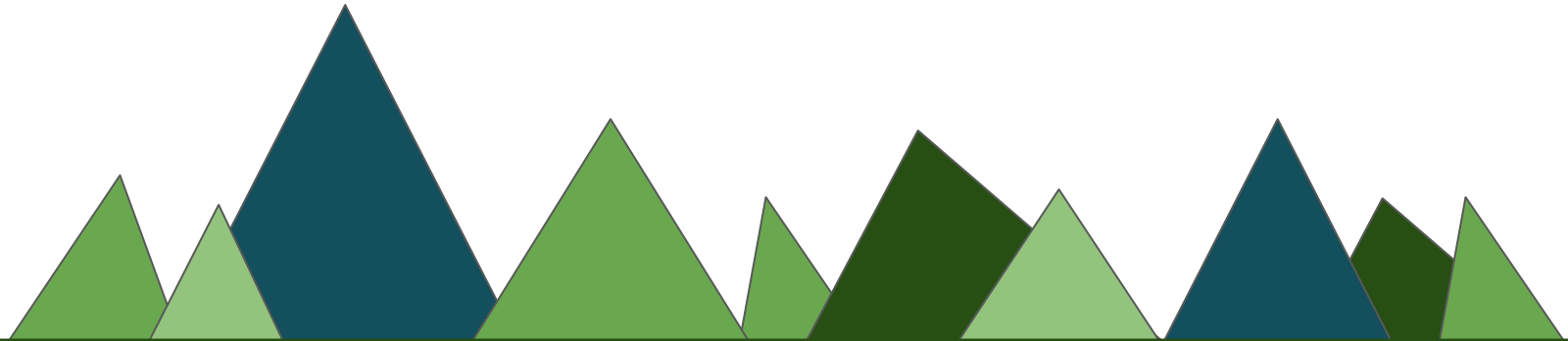
**President and CEO**

KidsQuest Children's Museum (Bellevue, WA)

## **Sunny Spicer**

**Executive Director**

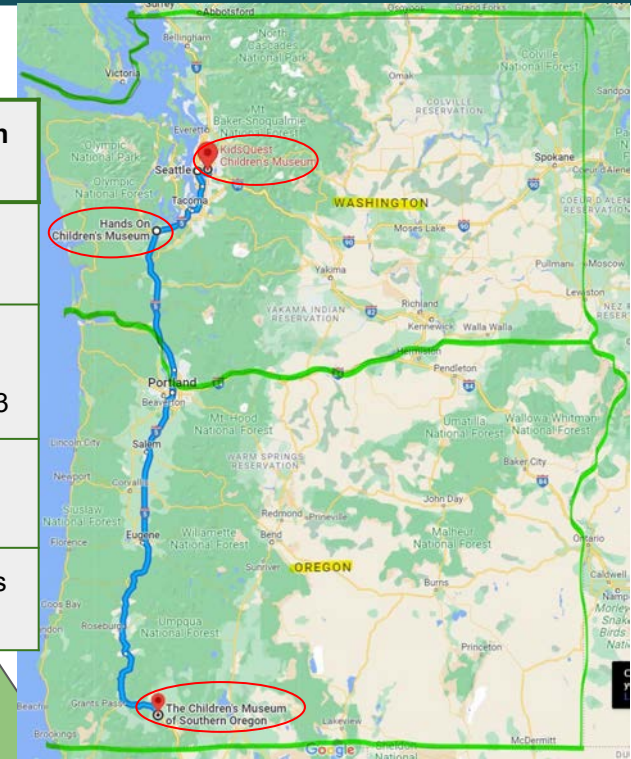
The Children's Museum of Southern Oregon (Medford, OR)



# How Rewarding is Risk?

Play, risk-taking, and building capable children

<b>Stats:</b>	<b>KidsQuest Children's Museum (Bellevue WA)</b>	<b>Hands On Children's Museum (Olympia, WA)</b>	<b>TCM Southern Oregon (Medford, OR)</b>
SF Indoors/ Outdoors	16,000 SF 1000 SF Gallery	28,000 SF ½ acre outdoor space	10,000 SF 1 acre outdoor space
Annual Visitors	200,000 (2019) 220,000 (2022)	315,000 (2019) 257,500 (2022)	88,900 (2019) 50,300 (half of 2022) Toward 120,000 in 2023
Area Population	150,000 - Bellevue 2 Million - Area	58,000 - Olympia 298,000 - County/Metro	87,000 - Medford 325,000 - Region
Preschool Stats	NA	2 preschool classrooms	5 preschool classrooms 7 satellite classrooms



# How Rewarding is Risk?

Play, risk-taking, and building capable children

**Welcome! Thank you for being here!**

Who is in the room?

What words come to mind when you think of kids and adults taking risks (at your museum!)?

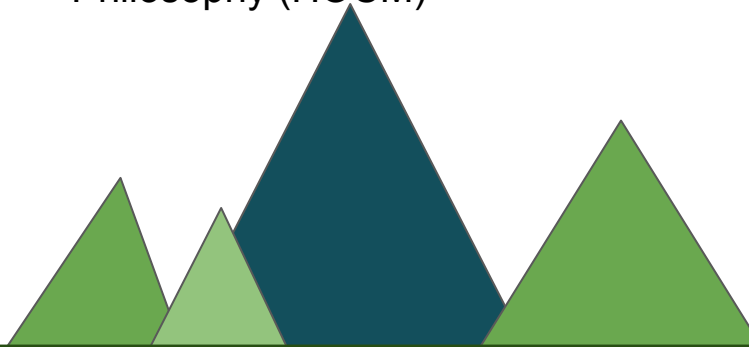
How likely are you to include "risk" in your exhibit planning?



# How important is risk-taking in play?

Pretty important...

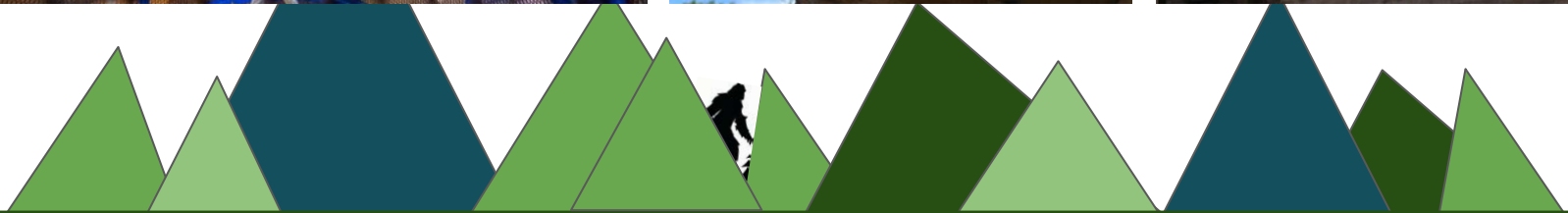
1. Overview - High Risk vs. High Stakes
2. KidsQuest Danger Days
3. Kids Can Do Hard Things! (TCMSO)
4. "Safe Risk" as a Foundational Philosophy (HOCM)



# Strong kids, safe kids, happy kids



# Growing and Exploring



# If kids are going to TRY THINGS....



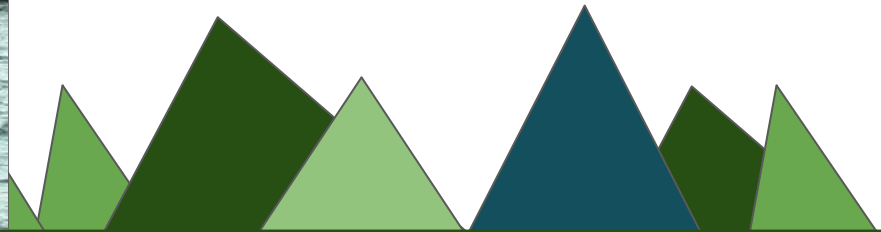
...they need guidance as they

## **Evaluate the risk**

*Severity*

*Advantages of success*

*Consequences of failure*





# If kids are going to TRY THINGS....

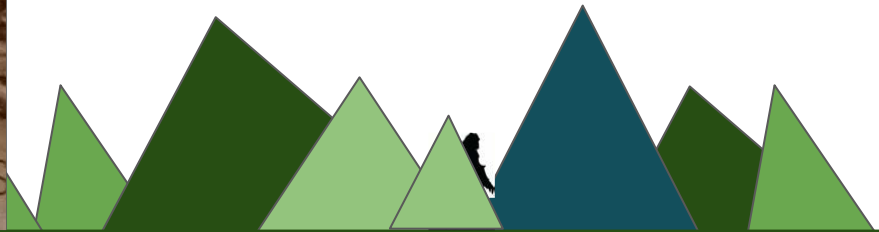


...they need guidance as they

**Evaluate the risk**

*Severity | Advantages of success | Consequences of failure*

**Assess their own skills**



# If kids are going to TRY THINGS....



The Discovery, Reno NV

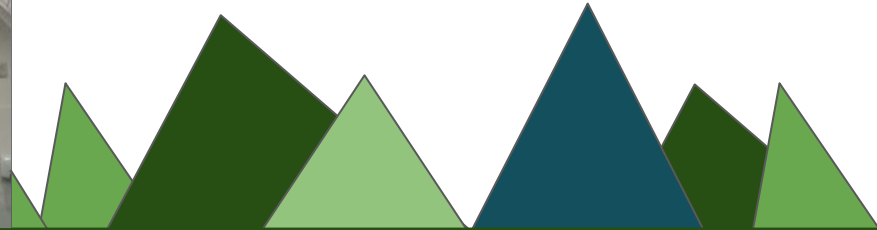
...they need guidance as they

**Evaluate the risk**

*Severity | Advantages of success | Consequences of failure*

**Assess their own skills**

**Make [good] decisions.**



# If kids are going to TRY THINGS....



Hands On Children's Museum, Olympia WA

...they need guidance as they

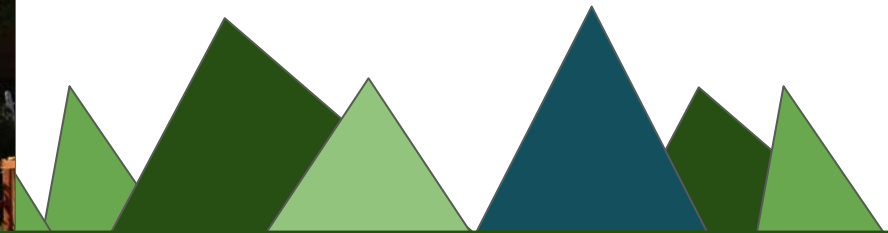
**Evaluate the risk**

*Severity | Advantages of success | Consequences of failure*

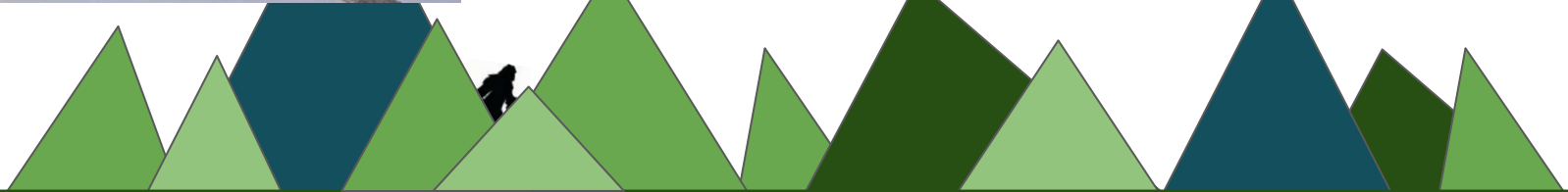
**Assess their own skills**

**Make [good] decisions**

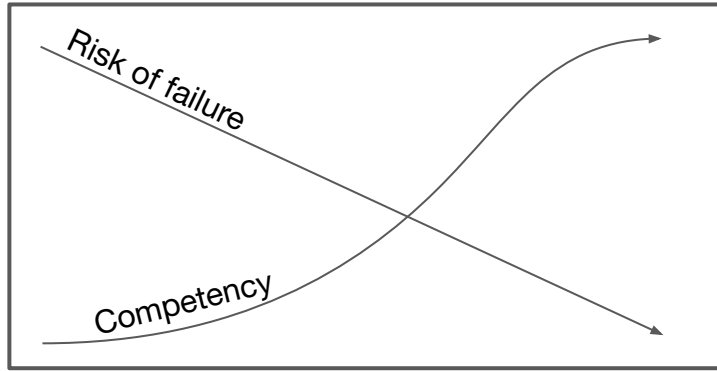
**Feel ok [or feel ok asking for help] if they misjudge the risk.**



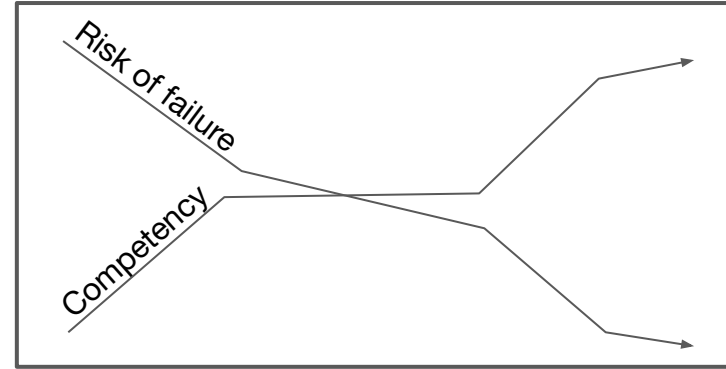
# Conquering Fears I



# Learning Curves - Gentle and Steep\*

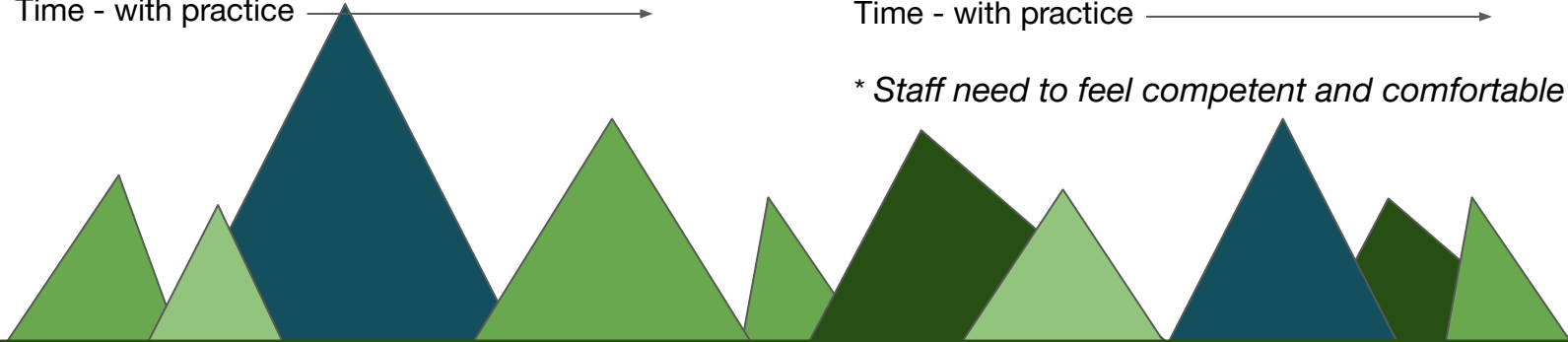


Time - with practice →

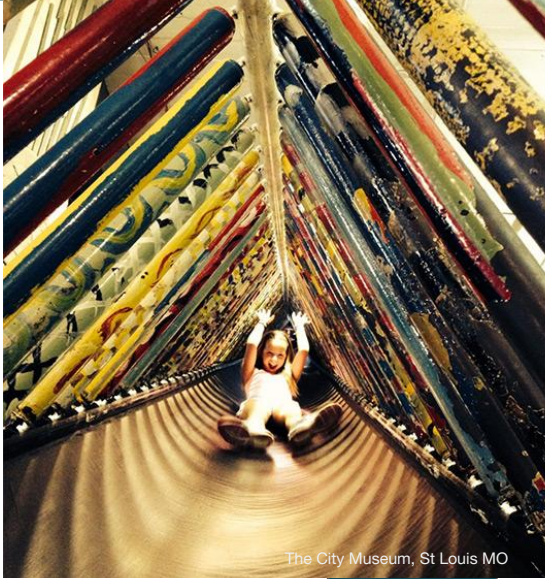


Time - with practice →

*\* Staff need to feel competent and comfortable as well!*



# Philosophical Choice



The City Museum, St Louis MO



The City Museum, St Louis MO

# If kids are taking risks for GROWTH's sake

...we want them to:

**Become (and feel) competent in many arenas**



# If kids are taking risks for GROWTH's sake

...we want them to:

**Become (and feel) competent in many arenas**

**Become good decision makers**





# If kids are taking risks for GROWTH's sake

...we want them to:

**Become (and feel) competent in many arenas**

**Become good decision makers**

**Develop their sense of agency**



Happy Hollow Park & Zoo, San Jose, CA

# If kids are taking risks for GROWTH's sake...

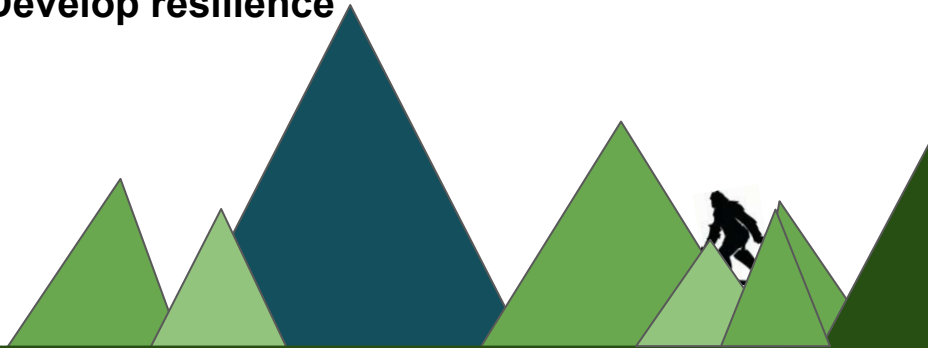
...we want them to:

**Become (and feel) competent in many arenas**

**Become good decision makers**

**Develop their sense of agency**

**Develop resilience**



Happy Hollow Park & Zoo, San Jose CA

# Conquering Fears II



Lowry Park Zoo, Tampa FL

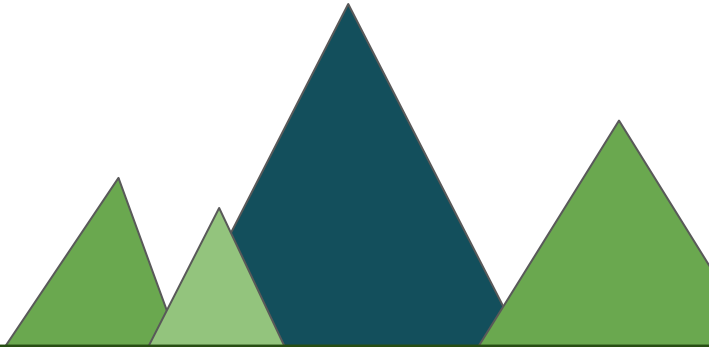


Nashville Zoo, Nashville TN

# High Risk vs. High Stakes



# Helping kids grow!



# KidsQuest Children's Museum's Danger Days

# Risky Thinking



# Risk starts at home – With your Board and Staff





# Being brave can be risky even for adults – Maybe more so



# Make it a party



# The great equalizer



Be brave and open your eyes



What seems simple to you...



# Knives, Ladders, Rocks and Fire







































Look out, Danger Ahead  
Open 2022



# Oregon Center for Creative Learning

---

The  
Children's  
Museum

OF SOUTHERN OREGON

The  
Ivy  
School



# Located in Semi-Rural Southern Oregon

- 10,000 sq ft exhibit space
- 1 acre of outdoor space
- 5 main campus preschool classrooms
- 7 satellite preschool locations
- Dearth of regional cultural opportunities for children
- Absence of Museums
- Shortage of Early Learning opportunities
- Low graduations rates



# Board Division Around “Risk” and “Danger”



- What is our obligation?
- What is our goal?

# Our Philosophy

## Risk = Resiliency

- Give kids challenges
- Let them have independence
- Problem solving comes before “let me help you”



“This is hard,  
but you can do hard things”

# Navigating the Preschool Sand Play





# Makery Programs

Real Power Tools, Real Materials, Open Ended Projects



## Ventures in Art



**Exposure to risk  
and challenges builds  
resilience while  
developing tools and  
skills to navigate  
the real world . . .**





# Hands On Children's Museum

Olympia WA

- 28,000 square feet indoors, half acre outdoors
- Olympia population 56,000 (2021); Thurston County 298,000 (2021)







# Hands On Children's Museum

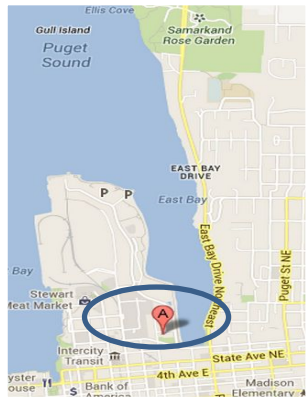
Olympia WA

- Annual Visitors 315,000 (2019); 257,500 (2022);
- Approx. 30% served through Free & Reduced Programs





# Located on the tip of Puget Sound



Three Projects inspired by water & nature

- Children's Museum & Outdoor Discovery Center
- LOTT WET Center – The Science of Wastewater
- East Bay Public Plaza & Reclaimed Stream



# East Bay Public Plaza

- First in State approved for immersion in reclaimed water
- 250' Interactive Stream
- Fed with Class A reclaimed water



# What are the risks?

## Common physical risks:

- Getting wet
  - Getting muddy or paint-stained
  - Falling
- 
- Splinters
  - Allergies
  - Choking hazards
  - Tool injuries and burns



# What are the risks?

## Other risks:

- Social risks: meeting new people, phobias, collaborative projects, trying new things,
- COVID and other germs





# Outdoor Discovery Center Concept

Promote physical & mental well-being by



- Connecting young children to nature
- Providing seamless indoor/outdoor play
- Providing "Safe Danger" experiences



# Puget Sound Beach

- Getting up high
- Loose logs & rough wood
- Water and mudpies!



# Meaghan D

- Slick surfaces
- Rope climbs
- Sand, rocks & insects







# Gravel Dig, Lighthouse & Stream

- 4-5' high rocks
- Alpine stream
- Lighthouse with spiral stair





# Hike & Trike Loop

- It's not level or straight!
- 4' elevation means trikes go fast!
- Padded Light Bollards





# Loose Parts & Risky Play

- Bamboo branches
- Sticks, stumps & unstable structures
- Large & small rocks





# Programming for Risk Experiences





**Host the pros.**





# Get advice from the experts.





# Start Small.





# Do things you know.







# Choose programs that staff get excited about.



# Don't be afraid to be wrong.





# Prototype and practice.





# Encourage the use of safety gear.





# Give parents choices.





# Label clearly.



### Soldering Safety

- ✓ Follow all directions carefully!
- ✓ Store soldering iron in stand when not in use.
- ✓ NEVER touch the metal tip.
- ✓ Metal transfers heat - ANY metal on the project may be hot!

**ALLERGY  
ALERT**

Alpaca Fiber is  
used in this project.





# Learn from observations.





# Admit your mistakes and move on.







# Why risk it?

- Practice making good decisions
- Develops and tests skills
- Inspires tinkering, making & physical activity





# Why risk it?

- Promotes discovery & independence
- Encourages problem solving, planning & cooperating





**Along with milk and veggies, kids need a steady diet of sticks and worms. Rocks need skipping. Holes need digging. Water needs splashing. Bugs and frogs and slimy stuff needs finding.**



# How Rewarding is Risk?

Play, risk-taking, and building capable children

**Tell us what you think:**

Are you thinking differently about risk?

Now what words come to mind when you think of kids taking risks (at your museum!)?

Now how likely are you to include "risk" in your exhibit planning?



# Thank you

...for building capable children!

**Alissa Rupp, FAIA, LEED - Principal**  
FRAME | Integrative Design Strategies (Seattle, WA)  
[Alissa@FrameDesignStrategies.com](mailto:Alissa@FrameDesignStrategies.com)

**Amanda Wilkening - Assistant Director of Visitor Engagement**  
Hands On Children's Museum (Olympia, WA)  
[AWilkening@HOCM.org](mailto:AWilkening@HOCM.org)

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KidsQuest Children's Museum (Bellevue, WA)  
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