



DISCOVERY Children's Museum
Executive Summary: Final Evaluation Report
October 5, 2018

In 2015, DISCOVERY Children's Museum (DCM) received a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to create and implement a staff training program, *DISCOVERY Training Boot Camp*. The program included DCM Education staff conducting three site visits to museums with successful staff training programs; the revision and expansion of DCM floor staff training materials; interaction training provided by outside consultants for Education and floor staff; the development of Activity Boxes for parents and children birth to 5; the creation of new portal pages for floor staff and museum educators/peers featuring training materials and videos on [DCM's website](#); and evaluation. Formative and summative evaluation was conducted by Cheryl Kessler of R&L Consulting (Arden, NC).

Formative Evaluation – Staff Centered

Formative evaluation efforts began with the creation of a program Logic Model which provided measurable outcomes for developing evaluation questions and selecting data collection and analysis methods. Logic Model outcomes aligned with the projected performance indicators:

- Front-line staff, interns and youth & adult volunteers apply new knowledge and skills during inquiry-based interactions with visitors;
- Front-line staff, interns and youth & adult volunteers are more confident and comfortable with facilitating educational experiences for visitors;
- Managerial-level staff employ a greater understanding of effective techniques and strategies for training and evaluating front-line staff in daily practice; and
- Planned tangible products for the project are completed.

Using the established outcomes, evaluation was conducted for the site visits made by Education staff, interaction training led by outside consultants, Activity Box development and revised floor staff training materials. Findings from the formative evaluation indicated that Education and floor staff had more resources and ideas to draw on from professional development and revised training materials, which they said made them feel better equipped to facilitate educational experiences with visitors.

Summative Evaluation – Visitor Centered

Summative evaluation focused on gathering evidence for the achievement of visitor outcomes, which reflected the staff training goals for facilitation and engagement:

- Adult/Parents become co-explorers with their children at DCM.
- Visitors perceive DCM floor staff as welcoming, friendly collaborators in the discovery process.
- Visitors respond/interact with DCM floor staff in a positive way. (Specific types of facilitation and engagement were described in revised staff training materials and these were used as indicators for successful interactions.)
- Visitors intend to return to DCM and interact with floor staff again in the same or different areas.
- Visitors realize the multi-layered experience options built into exhibits and programs.
- Visitors understand how different paths can guide subsequent visits.

Summative Visitor data indicates that every DCM gallery is interesting to visitors. The majority of respondents understand that playing with their children is important to their development and most believe they

understand how to play with their children. This finding is supported by the fact that 100% of respondents said they played/co-explored with their children in the galleries they visited. The finding that slightly less than half of respondents were neutral or had no opinion about wanting/needing to learn more about how to play with their children is a potential area for DCM to explore.

Visitor survey and interview data indicated that visitors experienced more than half of the suggested characteristics of staff interactions described in the revised staff training materials. There were some types of interactions that staff needs to utilize further in order to achieve all of the visitor outcomes. Nearly all of the visitor respondents said that staff made them feel welcome by smiling and/or making eye contact. Roughly three-quarters said they would tell friends/family how helpful DCM staff was during their visit.

The two visitor outcomes for which there was not clear evidence of achievement (Realize the multi-layered experience options built into exhibits and programs, Understand how different paths can guide subsequent visits) should be revisited to ensure that the staff training materials align with intention and are made explicit throughout in one-on-one training.

There were additional positive findings from the data that were unrelated to a specific outcome:

- 71% (n=76) Respondents who said they would tell friends/family about what they did at DCM. (Another 24% (n=25) said they probably would.)
- 36% (n=38) Respondents who said they would recreate at home something they did at DCM. (Another 34% (n=36) said they probably would.)
- 40% (n=42) Respondents who said they would learn more about something they did at DCM. (Another 31% (n=33) said they probably would.)
- 57% (n=76) Respondents who said they would visit another children's museum. (Another 32% (n=34) said they probably would.)

Conclusions

There is strong evidence that over half of the outcomes established for DCM's *DISCOVERY Training Boot Camp* and outlined in the Logic Model were achieved or partially achieved. Formative evaluation of staff outcomes provided solid evidence of Education staff investigating a variety of ideas and strategies seen at other museums and working out ways to immediately experiment with or implement new things. Floor staff's response to the Professional Development Follow-up Survey showed clear indications that the training was useful for increasing skills and knowledge of informal and inquiry-based techniques. Staff also felt that their ability to facilitate educational experiences with visitors, and have more flexibility in interactions with visitors, improved. The revised floor staff training materials support and empower staff in their work, which lends to enthusiasm for helping visitors. The observations of parent/child groups using the Parent & Child Activity Boxes helped to pinpoint what types of materials and manipulatives best supported interaction and could guide staff toward effective approaches for interacting with parents.

Appendices to Full Final Report

Appendix A: Plan for Piloting New Tools & Techniques

Appendix B: Memo of Evaluation Findings, Leadership Team Site Visit Reflections

Appendix C: Memo of Evaluation Findings, Staff Professional Development Follow-up Survey

Appendix D: Memo of Evaluation Findings, Parent & Child Activity Box Observations

Appendix E: Memo of Evaluation Findings, Staff Training Materials Survey

Appendix F: Long Form Summative Visitor Survey

Appendix G: Short Form Summative Visitor Survey

Appendix H: Summative Face-To-Face Interview Tree

Appendix I: Respondent Zip Codes