

## DCM Exhibitions – Staff Training Materials

### Toddler Town (PART A)

#### Exhibition Overview:

*Toddler Town* is a desert-themed exhibition specifically designed for children from birth through five years old and their adults. In *Toddler Town*, children are busy loading mined material into an overhead bucket system, discovering Nevada’s animals, and being train engineers. Children can role-play, explore, collaborate and cooperate, make decisions and problem solve as they play in structures designed to enhance their socialization and manipulative skills. The Crawl Zone provides a protected sensory area for children who aren’t yet walking but who are active explorers! Here, they can develop skills in tracking, self-recognition and exploration while parents sit at arm’s length on a comfortable bench that encircles the enclosure. A spacious Art Zone features hands-on, thematic activities designed to enhance developmental skills. The Reading Zone and Parent Resource Center are comfortable areas for parents and children to explore a variety of enriching and educational literature. A Nursing Nook is provided for nursing mothers, and bottle warmers are available in this special space. Toddler Town also conveniently offers a private ADA-accessible restroom with large changing table areas for comfort.

#### Target Audiences:

Children from birth to 5 + adults (families), school groups (Pre-K – K)

#### Education & Experience Goals:

- Children (aged 5 and younger) explore and play in environments designed to nurture their social, physical, emotional and intellectual development.
- Children use and develop communication and language skills while playing with other children, their families or teachers.
- Children engage in dramatic play and create narratives around activities.
- Children take part in pre-reading or reading activities independently or with their adult(s).
- Children play independently or cooperatively, utilizing problem solving and critical thinking skills.
- Children learn more about Nevada’s animals and their habitats.
- Children express themselves creatively, using a variety of art materials.
- Parents are supported in their roles through informational labels as well as resource materials.
- Parents extend their child’s learning experience through the use of Sensory Activity Boxes.
- Staff supports and extends the visitor experience by facilitating educational interactions, modeling ways to support the exploratory play of children, and leading programs.

#### Key Takeaway Messages:

- **Children learn through play.** In *Toddler Town*, “play” involves: role-play, open-ended/creative expression, fine & gross motor development, language development, decision making & problem solving, sorting & matching, sequencing, sensory & tactile exploration, self-esteem building, negotiation and social interaction.

- **Parents are critical to their children’s development.** In *Toddler Town*, parents are supported as education facilitators and co-learners with their children. Label copy is directed toward parents to both inform and encourage/guide interaction.

## **Appendix A**

### **Background Information:**

#### ***Physical & Intellectual Development (birth to age 5)***

It is often said that human babies are more helpless at birth than any other mammals are. The length of human childhood is long, requiring much learning and care from parents. While animals rely on instincts to survive in the world, humans learn how to be functioning adults largely through social interaction. A child’s development encompasses emotional, intellectual and physical changes, including learning language, symbolic thought, logic, memory, emotional awareness, empathy, morality, and self-identity. Children pass the same developmental milestones at greatly varying paces.

Source:

**Compton’s by Britannica, Britannica Online for Kids**

<http://kids.britannica.com/comptons/article-9273636/child-development>

#### ***Nevada Wildlife***

The state of Nevada has a diverse landscape, which ranges from mountains with elevations higher than 10,000 feet to arid deserts and low-lying areas 470 feet below sea level. Its wildlife is equally diverse, including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish. Some examples highlighted in *Toddler Town* are the Black-Tailed Jackrabbit, Desert Bighorn Sheep (state animal), Desert Tortoise (state reptile), Great Horned Owl, Lahontan Cutthroat Trout (state fish), Mountain Bluebird (state bird), Red Spotted Toad, Sidewinder Rattlesnake, and Vivid Dancer Damselfly (state insect).

Sources:

**Nevada Department of Wildlife**

[http://www.ndow.org/Nevada\\_Wildlife/](http://www.ndow.org/Nevada_Wildlife/)

**Nevada Legislature, Nevada Facts & State Emblems**

<http://leg.state.nv.us/General/NVFacts/index.cfm#Emblems>

#### ***Role-Playing/Dramatic Play***

Beginning around age 3 or 4, children start to experience empathy, or learn to put themselves in other people’s shoes. At this stage of development, children begin role-playing or dramatic play. Children often imitate adults – dressing up in grown-up clothes, playing “house,” and pretending to go to work or conduct other “adult” business. Any area of adult life that children have witnessed may become a subject of role-playing. Besides being enjoyable, the benefits of this type of play are many: having an opportunity to act differently than one normally does (e.g., acting brave when one feels timid), releasing impulses that might otherwise be unacceptable, and attempting to work out problems. Research has demonstrated links between role-playing, or pretend play, and increases in language usage, the ability to express feelings, social skills, and the beginnings of “self-regulation,” including delayed gratification, civility and empathy.

Sources:

**Compton's by Britannica, Britannica Online for Kids**

<http://kids.britannica.com/comptons/article-9276464/play>

**Psychology Today**

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/beautiful-minds/201203/the-need-pretend-play-in-child-development>

### ***Artistic Experimentation/Creativity***

Creativity is a highly individualized endeavor. A person's individuality impacts the perspectives that he or she brings to artistic observations, opinions, and creations. A celebration of experimentation and creativity, along with learned skills and background (such as the elements of art and principles of design) together influence the development of a person's "artistic mindset." Arts education helps children acquire critical 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, such as creativity, critical thinking, collaboration and communication.

Source:

**Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills**

<http://www.p21.org/index.php>

[http://www.p21.org/storage/documents/docs/P21\\_framework\\_0816.pdf](http://www.p21.org/storage/documents/docs/P21_framework_0816.pdf)

### **Resources:**

#### ***Physical & Intellectual Development/Parenting (birth to age 5)***

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/childdevelopment.html>

Child Development

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/index.html>

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, Child Development

<http://www.pbs.org/parents/child-development/>

PBS Parents, Child Development

<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/Pages/default.aspx>

American Academy of Pediatrics, Ages & Stages

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/promoting/parenting/parenting.cfm>

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Child Welfare Information Gateway, Parenting Infants & Young Children

#### ***Nevada Wildlife***

<http://leg.state.nv.us/General/NVfacts/index.cfm#Emblems>

Nevada Legislature, Nevada Facts & State Emblems

[http://www.ndow.org/Nevada\\_Wildlife/](http://www.ndow.org/Nevada_Wildlife/)  
Nevada Department of Wildlife

***Role-Playing/Dramatic Play***

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/beautiful-minds/201203/the-need-pretend-play-in-child-development>

Kaufman, Scott Barry, "The Need for Pretend Play in Child Development," Psychology Today, March 6, 2012.

[http://www.allianceforchildhood.org/restoring\\_play](http://www.allianceforchildhood.org/restoring_play)  
Alliance for Childhood, Restoring Play

***Artistic Experimentation/Creativity***

<http://creativity.denverartmuseum.org/for-teachers/resources/creativity/#8798>  
Denver Art Museum, Creativity Resource for Teachers

Dana Foundation - Brain Research

<http://www.dana.org/kids/> (For kids)

<http://www.dana.org/educators/> (For educators)

<http://www.arteducators.org/research/research>  
National Art Education Association, Research Resources