Terrible . . . Tumultuous . . . Terrific . . .

Teenagers!

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Warming the Cool Teenager

It's truly amazing when you think about it. Every single one of us who is older than nineteen experienced being a teenager, yet most of us can't seem to recall what it was actually like, and even fewer of us know how to relate to those who are currently working their way through this intense time of life.

The fact is that people grow in stages and, as they do, most find it difficult to remember the previous stage's realities and truths. Adolescents find remembering the reality of childhood almost impossible; adults find the behavior of adolescents positively baffling, even when they themselves may be only a few years removed from their own adolescence.

Perhaps we are blessed, rather than plagued, with forgetfulness. Forgetting protects us from recalling pain, and each stage of human development can be tough (and the teenage years can be particularly painful). Nonetheless, those of us who work with adolescents and young adults must understand what being a teenager is like in order to connect with them when teaching.

In his text, The Creative Imperative: A Four-Dimensional Theory of Human Growth, physician and psychiatrist Charles Johnston, M.D., offers this description of teens:

"The innocence of childhood is left behind in the need to challenge external limits and to establish inner ones. Emotions are strong. The adolescents' reality is morally ordered: composed of extremes of black and white. As with any such isometric polarity, the extremes are at once in mortal combat and in total collision. Adolescent reality is one logical contradiction after another. Independence is a major issue; yet, while assumptions of independence can provoke fierce self-assertion, acts that on the surface express independence always at once function to guarantee parental response and involvement. While non-conformity is highly prized, it takes its most common expression in the rigid conformity of cliques and fads. The prize for taking on the struggle with these paradoxes is the experience of identity, of self as created form."

Dr. Johnston's description provides us with several useful insights into most teenagers' state-of-mind, as well as information relevant to engaging the interest and involvement of teens when touring them through our institutions. Let's reflect on what he tells us as it relates to teaching in museums, historic sites, zoos, parks, and gardens.

**Emotions are strong.** The teen years are a highly emotional time of life. Since emotions are a dominant feature during this stage of human development, capitalize on them. Emotional responses to issues, objects, and artifacts may be more involving than intellectual ones.

Try asking questions that evoke feelings. Questions that accomplish this best are those that require teens to interpret or hypothesize. "What do you feel this artist is saying about city life in this composition?" "Why is it that most people have an adverse reaction to even the most beneficial insects?" "Why might today's fashions be so different from the way they were during the nineteenth century?"

**... extremes of black and white.** Teens are in the process of coming to their own decisions about right and wrong, good and bad. They are practiced at making these types of determinations and are, therefore, used to making comparisons.

Ask questions that require teenagers to discover differences or similarities. "How many differences can you find between these two landscape paintings?"

"What characteristics do these plants share in common?" "In what ways are the customs of this culture similar to our own?"

Or, ask questions that require decision-making and then explore the reasoning process behind the decisions made. "If you could bring one of these art works to a sick friend, which would you choose and why would you choose it?" "How do you feel about people owning and keeping exotic pets?"

"If you were to select one object as most representative of the Revolutionary War period, which would you choose and why?"

**Independence is a major issue ...** Teens will want to feel self-sufficient in your institution. If they are treated like children, they will behave like children. Likewise, if they are made to feel reliant upon you as their mentor or guardian, they will turn off. Should they believe your reason for asking them questions is to test them, or in any way to reveal their lack of knowledge, they may become hesitant to respond or even antagonistic.

Provide teens with activities that make them feel competent and qualified. Use open-ended questions that accommodate a variety of responses so that their answers can be validated. Or, create self-tests that allow teens to call upon their own perceptual awareness. Have them observe animal behaviors, make note of details in works of art or historical artifacts, or ask them to re-group objects using categories of their own making.

Let teens know from the very beginning of your encounter with them that you value their insights. Tell them that you ask questions and conduct activities to involve them because each person brings a unique perspective to the issues and objects at your institution.
Let them know that you are genuinely interested in their responses. Then, be certain to demonstrate your interest by being attentive and accepting. Listen to what they have to say without making value judgments about them from their answers.

✓ ... acts that on the surface express independence always at once function to guarantee parental response and involvement. The desire for parental (or a parental figure’s) response and involvement differs among teenagers. The least secure among them often are those who do things to garner the most adult reaction. Why bite on their hook? Why allow them to control the agenda?

I once toured a group of teens where one young man continued to wear his sunglasses inside the museum building. Though I felt his wearing sunglasses was rude and annoying, I did not tell him to take them off. Half-way through the tour however, I did ask if I could borrow them. Using the pretext of wanting to see how the colors within paintings shifted when you looked at them through green-tinted glass, I got him to remove his glasses and was able to engage the group in a productive conversation about reproductions, and why they may not accurately represent the colors found in original works of art.

Try responding to outrageous or obstreperous behaviors in a manner other than classically authoritarian. Think of a clever way to use a behavior to your advantage. Find a way to laugh and be a “good sport” without seeming to encourage the misbehavior. Sometimes, just being a “good sport” creates peer pressure on the problem teen to stop being disruptive. However, should the disruptive or rude behavior escalate, or should it seriously impair your ability to provide a tour to the other participants, stop your tour and get assistance from a teacher, chaperone, museum staff member, or guard.

✓ ... non-conformity is highly prized ... Since being a non-conformist is valued by teenagers, why not use it as a theme or recurring motif for your tour? Are there artists, scientists, or historical figures that could be thought of as rebellious, or who pushed their own visions or theories against those of convention? Figure out a way to connect this issue to your lesson, and then create some drama. Find and share a good story. Let teens know that the people reflected in your exhibitions were as human as they are, that they struggled against societal pressures, and that they had courage and/or conviction.

As you sort through ways to better engage teenagers in the learning process remember that the burden of tone and attitude is on you. Approach teens as adults, convey respect for their thoughts in your words and deeds, and then allow them to be adolescents. Though they may look like adults, and demand to be treated as such, they are actually “adults-in-training.” It is not realistic, nor is it fair, to always expect adult behaviors.

Most importantly, try to enjoy the terrible, tumultuous, and terrific things that teens will do. Don’t take everything personally. The issues teens are grappling with, and the attitudes they display, exist in a far larger context than a visit to your institution. If you can relax and appreciate teens for who they are, you will find that many of their insights and perspectives will delight you, and you will have traveled a long way down the path of effectiveness with this challenging and rewarding audience.

Alan Gartenhaus
Publishing Editor

THE DOCENT EDUCATOR
A Method to the Madness

What Teens Need and Want from Us

How much content from your last tour do you think students retained? It may well depend on the method you used to convey the information.

According to S. Farnham-Diggery in Paradigms of Knowledge and Instruction (1994), there are four teaching methods which encompass all other teaching activities, they are: 1) talking, 2) displaying, 3) coaching, and 4) arranging the learning environment. In the first method, the teacher's talk may be declarative or inductive, that is, it may tell, discuss, or question. In the second, the teacher models or demonstrates. In the third method, the teacher provides cues and suggested modifications while the student is engaged in some activity. In the fourth, the teacher designs and implements activities that stimulate self-learning.

Docents should be aware that student retention rates vary widely among these methods. According to the Learning Pyramid, produced by the National Training Laboratories in Bethel, Maine, a learner's retention rate of the content of a lecture is a shockingly low 5%. (Perhaps it's not so shocking. How much do you remember from the last lecture you heard?) However, if students discuss that content in a group, the retention rate jumps to a much more respectable 50%. Additionally, we retain 70% of what we, ourselves, actually say or ask in a discussion.

In her book, Endangered Minds (1990), Jane M. Healey corroborates the critical role played by the use of spoken and written language in one's learning process. She writes, "Language shapes culture, language shapes thinking — and language shapes brains" literally, she explains, by arranging synapses which alter the physiological development of the neocortex, the part of the brain where mathematical, verbal, and logical functions are located.

Healey feels that most educational experiences, with their reliance on teacher lecture, worksheets, and reading chapters only to answer questions at the end, are causing the brains of today's children to be "structured in language patterns antagonistic to the values and goals of formal education. The culprit ... is diminished and degraded exposure to the forms of good, meaningful language that enables us to converse with others, with the written word, and with our own minds ... To reason effectively and solve problems ... growing minds ... need to learn what it feels like to be in charge of one's own brain, actively pursuing a mental or physical trail, inhibiting response to the lure of distractions."

The solution? According to at least three sources cited by Mark A. Forget in A Brain Compatible Approach to Learning, Jane Healey's Endangered Minds, the Virginia Department of Education's Plain Talk (1987), and Judy S. Richardson and Raymond F. Morgan's Reading to Learn in the Content Areas (1994), solutions must involve students in the active, rather than passive, and interactive pursuit of meaning and understanding in an affective environment, one that is compassionate and does not rely on threats as a motivation to learn. Where better than in museums?

These research findings are in complete accordance with the desires expressed by 50 high school students we recently surveyed. In preparation for a workshop for museum educators and docents, Cindy Moneta, art department chair at Ocean Lakes High School in Virginia Beach, polled her students. Her question to the students was simple: what should and shouldn't art museum docents do when touring high school students? Their answers, which were not exclusive to art museums, reflect concerns ranging from content and teaching strategies to style of presentation and even personal hygiene.

Teenagers' interest in the tours they receive, and their ability to retain what they are taught, depends, in large measure, upon the methods used to teach them.
Perhaps most importantly, the majority of students' answers corroborate research which asserts that a non-threatening inquiry-based, language-rich, student-centered approach is most effective. The following are some of their responses:

- Let us select the object to discuss
- Ask more specific questions about the images that interest us
- Ask us what we are interested in
- Ask how we can relate the subject or information to our lives
- Allow us to ask questions
- Allow us to interpret the image
- Ask for our opinions
- Let us tell you what we already know
- Give your information after we have given our view, opinions, interpretations
- Find out what we are expecting to learn
- Give us food for thought and then allow us to participate
- Give us a chance to think and figure certain things out.

Believe it or not, some activities they said the enjoy include role playing, games, treasure hunts, and meaningful worksheets (as opposed to "busy" work). Perhaps students desire these kinds of activities because they intuitively know that allowing learners to practice by doing means they are likely to retain 75% of the content!

In terms of interpersonal communication, the students want us to follow the "golden rule" by being nice, friendly, enthusiastic, caring, and warm while avoiding treating them like children and underestimating them. Worse, perhaps, is being condescending or talking down to them, as well as the opposite, acting intimidated. They asked that we not assume that they aren't listening nor that they do not care, and to please not lose patience with them.

Not surprisingly, teens are concerned with establishing their own identity — autonomy is important to them. They recommend being allowed to pick their own groups for group activities, as well as being allowed to explore on their own.

They want educators to remember the rules of effective public speaking by acting natural and relaxed, facing the audience, speaking clearly and loudly enough, speaking eloquently, spicing up the information, adding humor, modulating our facial expressions and tone of voice, speaking at a moderate pace and avoiding fillers such as "um" and "like." Looking nice and having fresh breath were important to at least two other students.

High on the "don't" list were lecturing, rambling on-and-on, over-explaining, overwhelming them with too many facts and too much information, and spending too long on one object. Remember, students only retain an estimated 5% of what is lectured to them. Additionally, two students implored us to "be creative" and "use props."

Unwittingly, these students reinforced exactly what leading researchers in the field of education have indicated as the new paradigm for education. The implications for those of us challenged with creating meaningful educational experiences in museums, historic sites, zoos, parks, and botanical gardens are quite clear and have been espoused in the pages of The Docent Educator since its inception: tours should be concentrated with varied opportunities for students to use language to express and connect ideas, ask and answer questions, and discuss content with the docent, teacher, and other students.

When possible, students preference and research indicate that docents should stretch perhaps beyond their "comfort zone" to incorporate demonstrations (30% retention rate) and to allow student to practice by doing (75% retention rate). Further, facilitating a learning environment in which students use what they have learned immediately will likely result in a whopping 90% retention of content. (A simple way to achieve this goal is to ask students to apply concepts learned in relation to one object discussed on the tour to a subsequent object in the course of the same tour.) The psychological context for all of this teaching and learning should not only be non-threatening, but should be pleasant and emotionally supportive of the students.

Finally, it is important for docents to recognize that the researchers' and students' recommendations are method-related, not style-related. That is, regardless of one's personal teaching style, all docents can succeed as effective educators by following the guidelines above. In so doing, docents will discover that the content to be learned is the means to an end, rather than the end itself.

What is that end? Students who can think, reason, abstract, connect, hypothesize, make judgments, and suggest solutions. And, students who find doing so enjoyable enough to sustain for a lifetime.

by Betsy Gough-DiJulio

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Teaching Teens with a Dual Curriculum

The goals of this program are as follows:

- **Students will increase competency in 1930's history and art through direct, vivid research of original materials, paintings, fine art prints, music, everyday objects, documents, and photographs.**

- **Students are introduced to museum resources beyond the galleries — such as curatorial staff, archives, libraries, collection study areas — and will realize the life-long learning potential of community museums.**

- **Museum resources are integrated with classroom learning and the American history curriculum is expanded and enhance through integration of the arts and history.**

Students for their museum visits using photographs, slides and a video provided by the museums in a pre-visit packet. Students travel to both museums in one day, completing a final project at whichever museum they visit last. A class spends three hours in each institution with a break for lunch. In the historical museum, they examine the history of Tempe as they tour the main hall of the museum. In the art museum, the students view temporary exhibitions and the historic American and Mexican art galleries, laying the groundwork for examining artworks as historical documents.

After this introduction, students are divided into small groups to conduct research on eight different topics pertinent to the 1930's: lifestyles, commerce/community, migration, federal programs, rural life / agriculture, education, leisure activities / entertainment, and architecture. These topics are represented by original objects and some secondary source material in each museum. Study guide questions help the students focus on each topic. There is one question from each museum under every topic. Accompanied by docents, students conduct their research in galleries, storage areas, archives, and research facilities.

The concluding activity requires students to curate their own exhibition of objects using findings from both museums. Students are given twenty photographs of objects — ten from each institution. Working in groups, and guided by questions, students select objects for their exhibition, and write exhibition labels. This final activity integrates the students' knowledge of art and history and, through the application of their research, cements their understanding of the 1930's. This project, which is incorporated into the classroom study of the 1930's, is graded by the teachers.

The integrating of two distinctly different disciplines into a dual curriculum breaks conventional academic boundaries for the students. Many have never discovered links between the two disciplines before, and most admit that they have never been in one or both of the museums.

The variety of materials and applications engages the students. The program brings them face-to-face with real works of art and objects of...
history and exposes them to research techniques and the excitement of discovery. They generally find at least one item of interest in each of the museums.

Each year, museum educators and teachers meet before the program begins to review the previous year’s experiences, set the schedule, and discuss possible modifications. Over time we learned how to create a more effective visit for high school students. For instance, since the students were unfamiliar with the museum, they were easily distracted.

We found that students did not possess many of the skills needed to draw meaning from museum objects, and had to hone our questions in ways that directed them toward elaboration or involvement.

Though students say they prefer to be “free” to investigate based on their own interests, and not to have specific tasks to accomplish, their teachers felt the study guides gave students a focus and directed their efforts and research. We believe that the guide encourages students to conduct their own research and interpretation, and has proven more effective as an educational tool than the standard lecture tour. In addition, the study guides provide teachers with an opportunity to evaluate the students and their projects.

To ease their curiosity and help them focus on their research project we added an introductory tour at both institutions. Access to the restricted areas of the museum did not mean much so long as students perceived that they were missing something exciting in the exhibit halls. After a general tour, however, we could hold their attention.

We also learned how to improve the study guides. We adjusted the history questions to prompt investigation rather than the retrieval of correct responses. We changed the art questions, too, making them less analytical and more specific to each of the works examined.

The concluding activity also changed. At first, the final project consisted of oral presentations by each student on a single topic. These presentations were often inaccurate and difficult to correct. Because the students focused on one topic, they did not perceive the connection between the two museums and the overall impression of the 1930’s. Today, the final activity includes materials from both museums and is accomplished in groups. The students self-govern the misinformation through the development of a title and object labels for their 1930’s exhibition. Docents are available to answer questions and guide the students. Later, back at school, the teacher grades the written document, as well as using it as the basis for further discussions in class.

Linking the information and resources of the two museums gives added incentive for teachers to make field trips. Visiting two institutions in one day and having a concrete end product that is directly linked with school curriculum makes this program salable to school administrators. The rapport developed between the teachers and museum personnel has resulted in far better communication and a more effective program.

Creating a dual curriculum can be challenging, but its many rewards are worth the effort. The program fosters an exciting, open exchange between docents, students, teachers, and museum professionals. Docents enjoy the productive interaction with high school students, and the students learn about museums as community resources.

Teachers become more aware of the museums as educational allies and as resources, and tend to bring other classes to the museums and become involved in other museum offerings. And, the museum professionals gain insights into teacher and student needs and goals while becoming more effective in our interaction with high school audiences.

Having examined the 1930’s through the collections of both an art and a history museum, these students prepare for their culminating activity while at the Tempe Historical Museum.

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Teenagers “Living” at the Museum

The Musée de la Civilisation in Québec City is a young, education-oriented institution constructed around a social science theme. It has welcomed 700,000 visitors every year since 1988. According to visitor surveys, what younger people enjoy most about the Musée is its warm welcome, the range of exhibitions, and the quality of the animation. In return, the Musée derives great satisfaction from hearing young people talk about the institution as “their museum,” a place where they feel at home.

What interests teens so much that they practically live at the Musée? Allow me to summarize a few encounters that helped to create a bond between the Musée and its young visitors.

Every year, some 122,000 young people take part in the Musée’s educational activities. Many of them come on class visits. Guide-animateurs show them through the exhibitions, discovery spaces, and workshops while on special tours adapted to their interests and curriculum. Young visitors also take part in theatrical animation capsules or rallies that the Musée designs especially for them. As part of the exhibition, Of Puppets and Theatre, students from two high schools made more than one hundred puppets that were used in educational workshops. Several were displayed in the exhibition hall and in the entrance hall. This joint venture was an unforgettable experience, we were told, because young people often lack confidence in their potential and suffer from society’s skepticism toward them and their age group.

Young people also visit the Musée alone or in small groups. On the interactive guided tour entitled Québec Women, a Great Legacy, the 13 to 24 age group is most interested in seeing and handling a collection of bizarre objects used in the lives and work of women. This tour is part of the permanent exhibition Memories. Many of these young people are astonished, to say the least, when they learn that just sixty years ago, women in the province of Québec did not have the right to vote. Some find it hard to believe, because, like most young people, they cannot tolerate injustice.

Boys and girls alike were united around the theme of peace when they visited the 1993 exhibition Children at War: 1914 – 1993. This exhibition, prepared jointly with the Musée de la Croix-Rouge du Croissant Rouge, in Geneva, was particularly popular with younger visitors. In a setting of barbed wire, smoke, and cello music, the Musée presented nearly one hundred remarkable war photographs taken by reporters, together with drawings by thirty young people who had experienced the ravages of war. We were able to watch the youngsters when they visited the exhibition freely, in small groups. They chatted to one another, and left texts and drawings on the subject in the book of comments provided. The book is a thought-provoking testimony, calling for immediate collective action. As might have been expected, the thoughts expressed by these visitors converge toward themes of injustice, responsibility, and the future.

Some 200 students invaded the Musée one October weekend in 1993 to discuss values and the future. They came to sing, dance, pray, and express their own ideas through sketches. They even organized a “values race” through the exhibitions, copied from the car rally format! Small teams were formed. Each, in turn, proceeded into three exhibitions, chasing, searching, and identifying values, such as the “courage” of pioneers, or the “openness” toward immigrants, or the conscious “preservation of resources.” The results of their quest were forwarded in a plenary meeting...
session, where their findings were shown boldly on flashcards.

They appreciated their discussions with receptive animators, other young people and adults from the pastoral service and the Education Department, who were willing to listen and provide advice if necessary. For this group, the Musée was a true “life experience.” The highlight of the weekend was the sleep over, and the chance to go behind the scenes and visit the storerooms and all the other mysterious places usually kept out of the general view.

**Coup de théâtre at the Musée**

Night, the subject of an exhibition, served as the general theme for an event involving 200 high school students who, in 1994-1995, came to present their theatrical sketches during the Coup de théâtre weekend (an all-nighter at the Musée). The students arrived dressed as characters of their choice from the exhibitions Nightshades and Goldilocks and the Three Bears; we had the joy of seeing these young people bring the characters to life. In the company of theatre professionals, the students were given the opportunity to improvise, or take part in stage and show design, dance or puppet workshops, before spending the rest of the night in the disco or at the night owl theatre, with its special program of horror movies!

**Happening**

Development programs should not be reserved exclusively for regular schoolgoers, and should try to reach out to children from the street, runaways, and victims of all types ... often the victims of social prejudice. One March night in 1995, at a happening entitled “The Night Belongs to Me,” the Musée opened its doors to young homeless people, street dwellers, those for whom life has not been easy. We believe that museums can go beyond appearances and discover the creativity and treasures lying hidden behind the darkest hours of the night.

Throughout the Musée, more than 35 young people performed live for a public of 800 people, mainly youngsters with brightly colored hair and studded clothes. Many different forms of artistic expression were represented: theatre, rock music, live painting and sculpture, body painting, graffiti art, fashion design, comic strips, makeup, and a poetry workshop. The happening was organized jointly with a Québec City shelter, the Maison Dauphine, whose mission is to provide young people in the throes of family, psycho-emotional or socioeconomic problems with protection and advice, or even help — in the form of detoxification, for example.

The event led to dialogue between people who would otherwise never have come into contact with each other. It also brought about a longer term relationship with the shelter. However, perhaps its greatest achievement was that it enabled two youngsters to find employment with people who witnessed their achievements in fashion design and picture hanging at the happening.

**Concrete Action at the Musée**

As we have seen, high school and college students enjoy the Musée’s educational activities. The Musée has also developed a series of events designed for specific pastoral, theatre, and scientific groups. It has even tried to reach the people that society has excluded. We are now at the point of wondering what other activities we could offer. What paths should we take in the future? How can we encourage young people to express themselves through the Musée? Despite society’s all-too-frequent criticism of the lack of individual and collective commitment by young people, it is clear to us that when they have a place to talk and act,

*(Continued on back page.)*
Barcelona’s Museum of Contemporary Art

A new $35 million Contemporary Art Museum opened this past autumn in Barcelona, Spain. The museum, designed by American architect Richard Meier, has received great praise for its beauty and collection. Complementing Barcelona’s fine Picasso Museum and a hilltop foundation containing a collection of Miró’s work, the Contemporary Art Museum is currently presenting an exhibition of the Dada and Expressionist movements with a strong representation of Spanish and Catalan artists.

In addition to generating great excitement among the artistic community, completion of the Contemporary Art Museum of Barcelona is credited with revitalizing the Raval neighborhood on the edge of Barcelona’s old Gothic quarter. Inaugurated by King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia, the Museum is located at 1 Plaça dels Angles, telephone (93) 412 08 10.

An Accommodating Schedule

The Alabama Department of Archives and History, in Montgomery, provides teachers with several ways to explore their museum. During the week, docent-led tours are available for all grade levels. Each tour examines the collection using a theme, such as: The American Indian, 19th Century Life, or The Civil War Soldier. If a teacher prefers to tour the students on their own, the Archives books the group visit on Fridays. The Archives sends the teacher background information and permits the class to tour at their own pace. If a teacher wishes students to have both a docent-led tour and free time to return to the exhibitions on their own, the museum books the tour on Mondays.

On Mondays, docent-led tours are offered at specific times with time provided in-between for classes to use the galleries on their own.

Parks as Classrooms

In 1872, the United States became the first country to set aside land as a national park with the creation of Yellowstone National Park. Today, almost every nation in the world has some sort of national park system and most are patterned after the Yellowstone idea.

There are over 350 national parks across the United States, including parks in such large cities as New York City, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Atlanta, and St. Louis. National parks can encompass sites that re-create the lives of famous people like George Washington, Martin Luther King, and Clara Barton, showing visitors where they grew up, where they worked, and how they lived.

National parks protect lands and resources. They provide visitors with views of coastal and interior ecosystems. Mammals, fish, birds, and other living things benefit from the parks, as do the visitors who are able to observe them. Parks are among our most essential outdoor classrooms.

New Rules for Pre-K

According to Teacher Magazine, new rules for teaching preschool children are springing up throughout the country. While in the past, teachers may have had to take a class or two in child development, that is changing. An increasing number of schools offering prekindergarten, and a wave of research deploring the lack of age-appropriate training in the child-care industry, have led almost a dozen states to upgrade their licensing requirements for early childhood teachers.

National experts believe that the licensing changes will make a dent in one of the biggest barriers to high-quality care: poor professional training. Advocates for youngsters point out, however, that these changes generally apply to public school teachers only, and public schools only represent a small portion of the child-care industry.

A Regional Docent Conference

The 6th annual Docent Education Conference will be held by The Museum of Arts and Science in Daytona Beach, Florida, on Monday, November 18, 1996. The theme of this year’s conference is “Visitor Centered Approaches to Museum Education,” and will include workshops by Myriam Springer, former associate director for programs at the Smithsonian Institution. The registration deadline is Monday, September 30. For more information, call Johanna Riddle, Curator of Education, at (904) 255-0285, extension 22.

The Power of Art

Have you ever wondered why, if art is peripheral to the “real world” as is often proclaimed, works of art are so coveted by the victors of wars? Countless examples exist where paintings, drawings, and other works of art were seized and stolen during colonial and war times. Take, for instance, the extensive collection of ancient Egyptian relics removed by the British, or the recent acknowledgment by the Russians that when Soviet troops returned home from World War II, they took with them thousands of works from what was to become East Germany.
It works for me...
Sharing successful techniques, thoughts, and ideas.

Underlining important points from *The Docent Educator* seemed like a good idea until I noticed that every sentence of every issue was underlined. Every sentence contains a good idea.

I just mailed the issue with your '94 article on *Imagining* to my daughter who has our 15 month old grandson. I asked her to return the issue to me when she and her husband finished studying it. And, I just filed your winter issue after reading it through. Your article: *Motivating the Desire to Learn* was superb.

I have subscribed to one magazine for about 50 years and read dozens of journals, newspapers, and magazines monthly in my work. Never has a publication brought more joy, excitement, and challenge into my life than *The Docent Educator*. The continued high quality of your lead article and the articles by contributing writers, covering such a broad spectrum of education and museums, is amazing. I greatly enjoy my work as a Birmingham Museum of Art docent and your journal contributes to that enjoyment.

Thank you for your enlightening and enjoyable education and training of docents.

Creighton E. Johnson, docent
Birmingham Museum of Art

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Previous issues of *The Docent Educator* are available for $9 each ($11 USD for subscribers outside the United States). To order previous issues, simply send us the title and date of the issue desired, along with your check.

[Sorry, but to keep costs to a minimum, we do not bill or invoice.]

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(Vol. 5, No. 3) Spring 1996

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A Junior Docent Program

How do we best utilize the energy and enthusiasm of teenagers to help further the mission of our museum? That might be a question asked by museum educators contemplating the development of new youth programs at their sites. The New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science, after asking this and other questions and researching existing programs, instituted a youth program - the Junior Docent program - in 1991. This program has evolved into one of the museum’s most successful educational programs. The description included here is intended to serve as an impetus and source of information for those considering starting such a program within their institution.

Program Description

The Junior Docent Program provides teens with a learning experience that increases their understanding of science and at the same time provides an opportunity for them to interact with the public and exposes them to science and education-related careers. The primary goal of this program is to promote a continued interest in science and science-related careers by middle and high school students, an age group that typically shows a sharp decline in math and science interest and abilities. A secondary goal is to provide the students with an opportunity to sharpen their communication and people skills.

These goals are achieved by:
a) training the teens to act as educational assistants in the Museum; b) providing them the opportunity to work regular shifts in the Museum; and c) providing "continuing education" and field trips with scientists and science educators.

Successful junior docents also participate in off-site events, sharing their knowledge with younger children at events such as Earth Day activities, the Discoverland Fair, and the Annual Zoo Day. During the first two years of the program, 25 teens were involved. In the last several years, this number has almost doubled.

Requirements for Participants

- 13 to 17, grades 8 through 12
- completed application with 2 letters of recommendation
- 2.0 grade average or better
- personal interview

Training Component

Junior docents are trained to work at four different stations: dinosaurs, marine life, bats of New Mexico /their ecological role, and rocks and minerals of New Mexico. Each station has touch specimens and activities for visitors that illustrate scientific concepts. The junior docents have the opportunity to interact with visitors of all ages and from around the world, but they are trained especially to engage children and families in experiences that enrich their Museum visit. The training sessions and on-going
continuing education are a mix of classroom presentations, activities in the Museum exhibit halls, and field trips.

**IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAM**

Upon completion of the training, participants are evaluated to determine if each one is ready to begin shifts at the four stations. The evaluation is a role-playing presentation, with the teens acting as the explainers at each station and the evaluators (program coordinator and other adult docents) serving as the visitor. Those participants whose presentations are not satisfactory are permitted to review written handouts and come in for practice sessions at the stations (with adult docents); after this, they are re-evaluated.

Once the teens have been “checked off” at all four stations, they begin working three-hour shifts in the summer twice a week. The program supervisor makes several “walk-throughs” to check on the young docents during each shift, particularly at the beginning of the summer.

Once a week, program participants get together to share some of their experiences and work out any problems which may be coming up at their stations. The second half of this meeting time is devoted to a scheduled “program” with different Museum staff members. During the summer of 1995, for example, the students interacted with a paleontologist, a zoologist, a biologist, a graphic designer, an exhibit fabricator, an advertising/public information officer, a paleontological preparator, and a biological preparator. In addition to explaining and showing the students what they do at the Museum, these professionals also discussed how they got into their careers and the sort of training required for each of their areas. Field trips with Museum staff (e.g., visiting the site of a bat colony and observing a bat flight or searching for fossils in the Sandia Mountains) sometimes take the place of the weekly meeting.

**BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND TO MUSEUM**

Some advantages of participating in this program are:
- Learn new skills and receive on-the-job training
- Become exposed to learning through experiential education
- Improve communication skills and self-esteem
- Make new friends while working in a “fun” environment
- Learn first hand about various careers (in science, exhibits design, education, etc.)
- Have direct interaction with positive role models
- Develop a future recommendation (for jobs, acceptance into other programs, etc.)
- Receive community service credit (e.g., for college applications)
- Make a personal contribution to the community

The Museum benefits by having a well-informed core of teens to act as ambassadors in their schools and communities, and by promoting an interest in science and natural history.

**UNEXPECTED RESULTS OF THE JUNIOR DOCENT PROGRAM**

Because a number of youths have returned summer after summer (even before stipends were paid), the Museum has developed a group of “veteran” junior docents. Therefore, in the summer of 1995, a new aspect of the program evolved. A small group of students worked directly with one of the Museum scientists on an on-going basis. Working in the paleontology laboratory, six of the Junior Docent participants assisted a Museum paleontologist for eight weeks during the summer, picking vertebrate micro-fossils from bulk matrix that had been collected in the field. This was so successful that many more Junior Docents are now interested in that same opportunity. This points the way to finding new ways of involving youth within the Museum—beyond the initial objectives of the Junior Docent Program. It is rewarding for our Museum staff to see these teenagers develop into mature young people and become excited about their involvement at the Museum!

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Madeleine Correa Zeigler is Educational Development Specialist for the New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science in Albuquerque, NM. Ms. Correa Zeigler’s responsibilities at NMMNHS include grant writing, educational program development, coordinating the Junior Docent Program and the “Proyecto Futuro” Program. She has been with the New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science for the past six years. Ms. Correa Zeigler has eight years’ experience in researching, developing, and implementing youth programs for museums and educational institutions and in developing curriculum for ESL (English as a Second Language) programs. She holds an M.Ed. in Counseling & Guidance and a B.A. in Languages (Spanish/French).
Kids Touring Kids began five years ago with a phone call from a mother whose son had a strong interest in history and needed to fulfill a community service commitment. Did we have something for him to do?

Shortly after receiving that call I read an article about using teens as volunteers to fill shortages left by women returning to the workplace. Realizing that teenagers have few opportunities to be authorities, and that house museum tours can seem deadly to young children, I made the connection and the Kids Touring Kids program was born.

Coe Hall has created a program where teens tour children through its historic rooms, offering young people an important role in a setting that is often less than comfortable with this age group. Photo: Coe Hall

Coe Hall is an historic house museum of the Gold Coast era located on the north shore of Long Island, N.Y. We welcome visitors April through mid-October. Trained volunteers guide visitors through the house in groups of ten or less, and in the summer months families with children make up a large percentage of our visitors. My thought was to separate child from guardian, allowing each of them an enjoyable tour with their peers.

In May, we advertise for teenagers, 13 to 16 years old, to apply for the position of teen guide. Each teen is personally interviewed. If accepted into the program, they and a guardian are required to attend a TEEN/PARENT meeting to review program commitments. The teen must be available for two days of training in June and then commit to one afternoon a week for the months of July and August.

Teen guides make themselves available to visiting guests with children ages four years and up during regular weekday visitation. The teens escort children through Coe Hall separately from the adults. The teens conduct their tours by focusing on the interests of their young visitors. Each room has a box with hands-on objects that apply to that specific room. The teens can work with as many or as few objects as they choose, or as the young visitors’ attention allows. When the tour is finished, the children are returned to the adult family member. As you can imagine, we hear glowing reports from people whose children have taken this special tour.

In 1995, fourteen teenagers participated in the Kids Touring Kids program, including the young man who started it all and his younger brother. In addition to this program, the teens also volunteer during other times of the year for special events such as our
Winter Festival. At the close of 1995, our teenage volunteers accumulated a total of 430 volunteer hours.

It seems that most programs using teen volunteers recruit in conjunction with local schools. I chose to go against this tide. I wanted to give any teenagers a chance to participate in the program, regardless of school recommendation, providing they met the criteria, attended training, and were available for most of the season.

Often a parent or guardian makes the initial call to my office after the publicity appears in local newspapers. However, if I don’t hear from the teen personally in subsequent phone calls, I know who is truly interested in volunteering and who is not.

Teens learn quickly. They are very eager to get to work once their training is over. The first season was disappointing to us, however, as adults seemed disinclined to let go of their children for forty minutes. Each day the teens and I kept trying to sell the program to the visiting public. We managed to get some publicity in the KIDS section of a major newspaper, but it came too late in the season to be of help. The following year we used that publicity, incorporating it into a flyer that we placed in the visitors center for families to read. Unfortunately, they didn’t. This past year we wrote an article about the program emphasizing that the teens were trained, sent it to the press early in the season, made up a new flyer, and re-educated all the senior staff about the Kids Touring Kids program. Finally, results! People came specifically to let their children tour the house with the trained teen guides.

Parents with children four years of age or older are asked at the time of ticket purchase if they would like their children to receive a special tour. The options are explained; if the answer is yes, the visiting children are introduced to the teen volunteer by the receptionist, asked to make a name tag, and then the tour begins.

Usually, the children’s tour starts before the adults do. The teen guides are taught how to respond to the children’s interests. Teens are encouraged to let the visiting children look and ask questions about things that get their attention, while educating the children about the house and the family who lived in it. They handle objects such as an old Chinese checker board in the den while considering what forms of entertainment the family might have joined in, or an oyster plate and shell in the dining room while discussing the foods and dining habits of the Coe children as compared to their own.

In addition to performing their regular duties, the teens are invited to participate in our scheduled special events. They might help interpret a room during the Fall Flower Show, or work as an elf helping young children with their holiday cards in Santa’s Photo Den. Sometimes we are short staffed in the museum shop and they are delighted to help. It’s amazing how they can adjust. The teens add another dimension to the volunteer staff and are accepted by the staff, adult volunteers, and the visiting public.

Since the inception of the Kids Touring Kids program, we have had a total of thirty-two teenagers volunteer. Of that total, twenty-two have been female and ten male. Their interests range from horseback riding, to cartoon drawing, to acting. Their other volunteer activities include working as tutors, in soup kitchens, and helping with beach clean-up. Most of them love to read, enjoy history, and want to be helpful to others … even those who are most shy.

The Teen Guide Program Review that has been given to each program participant is a valuable evaluative tool for understanding the program better. Is this program worth their time? Is it worthwhile to the visiting child? Their responses are helpful and honest.

Lest you think our program is all work, it isn’t. Teens and adults socialize with one another. The adult volunteers look forward to having the younger generation on duty and miss them when they’re gone. Watching the generations interact is fun and yet another benefit of this program!

Toward the close of the season, we celebrate the teen’s work with a pizza party. Each participant is given a folder containing a certificate, which serves as a small reminder of Coe Hall, and a program evaluation form with a self-addressed return envelope. Following the party, their parents and siblings are invited to tour Coe Hall with them. I wish you could see the enthusiasm and hear the conversations between them while on tour. You can tell how delighted they are to share their new found knowledge about Coe Hall and the family that lived here. It really lets me know we’re on the right track with this program. And, who knows? One of them may turn out to be a future Director of Coe Hall!

Susan Donovan is a former volunteer who serves as the part time Educational Services Coordinator at Coe Hall, where she has been on staff since 1988. In addition to the teen program, she is also responsible for the adult volunteer program, school education programs, and special events staffing. Prior to joining the staff at Coe Hall, Ms. Donovan worked as a children’s educator at Raynham Hall Museum in Oyster Bay, and with the Joseph Lloyd Manor House in Huntington.
Helping Adolescents
Build Self-Confidence

Ask teenagers what they want, and you’ll get a variety of answers — a new Lamborghini, an “A” on the chemistry exam, no zits, or world peace. Look closely at what they need, however, and the answer is unequivocal. Most adolescents need a large dose of self-confidence.

Adolescents are probably the most misunderstood and discriminated-against age group (with the possible exception of the elderly). Store owners view them with suspicion. Many middle and junior high schools treat them with disdain. Parents are confounded by their argumentative behaviors. And, museum educators often shudder at the thought of touring them.

Nevertheless, those who enjoy working with teenagers find them funny, sincere, intense, and fascinating; and they wouldn’t work with any other age group. They know that many of the challenges of teaching these “in-betweener” are directly related to the teenagers’ search for identity. And, that many of these challenges are made easier when adolescents acquire the self-confidence to accept the identity they discover.

Museums, science and nature centers, historic homes, and zoos can play an important part in helping teens develop self-confidence. By doing so, such institutions create a loyal, vital, and grateful audience. Definitely, a win – win situation for all.

Skills for Adolescents, a joint program of Lions Club International and Quest International, uses the analogy of a three-legged stool when discussing teen self-confidence. The legs are: skills and talents, appreciation, and responsibility. Each of the three components, or “legs,” must be present for a teenager to feel confident. One missing leg and the whole structure falls apart, dumping the teenager right on his or her fragile ego.

Skills and Talents

The teens who feel most self-confident are those who have skills and talents that are recognized as important by their family and peers. This is one reason so many teens find their identity in athletics. Academic success or talent in music, drama, or dance is also a confidence builder.

Museum programming that helps teens hone talents they already possess, or discover undeveloped talents and skills, can give teenagers an important boost in confidence. Such programs may allow teens to work with younger children, providing them with opportunities to discover talents for teaching or leadership. They may encourage teens to apply their computer skills to cataloging artifacts or creating member data bases. A love of the outdoors and concern for the environment may be enlarged by volunteer opportunities or internships at a science museum, zoo, botanical garden, or nature center.

As teens search for the identity they will wear for the rest of their lives, museums can allow them to “try on” careers. Or, in the case of a one-shot museum tour, hands-on experiences and inquiry learning may teach new skills and
uncover hidden talents by offering teens new or different ways of learning and contributing.

Appreciation

Museums also offer a great place to provide the second of the three “legs” of the self-confidence stool — appreciation. The most obvious forms of appreciation may be pictures and articles about teen accomplishments in the museum’s newsletter or the local newspaper, letters of thanks to the teen and their school for specific jobs well done, pizza parties, and recognition pins. All of these are important ways of showing the museum’s appreciation for the contributions of its teen volunteers.

There are equally important ways of expressing appreciation to even casual teenage visitors. Smiling, being attentive, and responding positively to touring teens goes a long way toward building self-confidence. Acknowledging the seriousness of their questions or expressing thanks for their attention and participation are also simple, but valuable, ways to show teenagers that your museum appreciates them.

Responsibility

The third leg of the stool of self-confidence is responsibility. As a teenager proves his responsibility, his self-confidence increases. The museum can provide opportunities for teens to accept responsibility for planning and presenting programs for younger children. Several of the museums featured in this issue of The Docent Educator go even farther, allowing teens a great deal of autonomy as they work within the museum. Even in the ordinary school tour, however, teens can be given choices about the exhibitions they wish to see, activities they wish to participate in, and the amount of time they want to spend in a particular gallery or area.

The flexible docent who can give her teen audience the responsibility for shaping the tour does a lot to build the self-confidence of the group.

Nancie Atwell, author of In the Middle, posits three principles to help junior high teachers “make the best of adolescence.” Museum educators can also benefit from these suggestions as they develop programs to involve teens and help build their self-confidence.

1- Accept the reality of the age group: By nature adolescents are volatile and social, and our teaching can take advantage of this, helping kids find meaningful ways to channel their energies and social needs instead of trying to legislate against them.

2 - Recognize that adolescence is a special and important time: ... adolescents, too, need to be seen as individuals and responded to as people who want to know.

3- Organize teaching in ways that help students understand and participate in adult reality: This means more say in what happens in the classroom, and more responsibility for their own learning.

Teenagers are changing and changeable. While it is always true that docents should understand the developmental characteristics of the groups with which they work, it is nowhere more important than with adolescents. Whenever possible, docents who work with teens should really like them! I read recently about an education professor with a unique pre-service requirement. Any student-teacher candidates who express a desire to work in the middle or high school must spend several hours at the mall observing the student with whom they think they want to work. Docents who are to work with this group ideally should have had positive experiences working with groups of teens. They will have seen the importance of self-confidence first-hand.

Those who teach adolescents must, themselves, be self-confident, flexible, and thick-skinned. They must also be confident in their knowledge of the material they are teaching; like other “pack animals,” teenagers can sense fear!

Docents who work with teens must be willing to treat their charges as adults, yet accept that they will act like children at any given moment. They must understand that teenagers can sound extremely rude when, in reality, they are only expressing their version of truth without the social graces that usually decorate it. They must know that adolescents are fierce in their loyalties, beliefs, and friendships, but that they may change those loyalties, beliefs, and friendships in the wink of an eye. They should also learn to separate individual teens from the “herd.” Individual teens can be charming, while at the same time they are intimidating in the “packs” in which they are most comfortable.

As with any prejudice, knowledge of individual teens can often dispel the “bad rap” teens receive in the popular media. It is sad, but true, that stories of teen violence, teen pregnancy, and teen drug abuse make titillating newspaper and magazine copy. It is difficult for individual teens to overcome the negative impact such reporting has on their self-image and the image others have of them. Is it any wonder why many teens come to school, and to your institution, with a defensive attitude that makes them hard to like?

Jackie Littleton
Associate Editor
I Remember When This Was a Tree …

Helping Teens Create Personal Meaning in the Museum

In order for teenagers to have a personalized museum experience, docents at the Museum of Art, Brigham Young University, in Provo, Utah, contact classroom teachers and, together, establish goals for the museum visit. Frequently, high school teachers are anxious for their students to discover something new at the museum — to have an enlightening experience where minds are awakened and learning enlivened.

At the MOA, we believe that this happens most effectively in an environment of open interpretation where teenagers are encouraged to create personal meaning. That is why MOA docents are encouraged not to pre-determine interpretations of art works, but to help teenagers learn how to construct their own “reasoned” interpretations by personally thinking through what they see and are learning about.

Docents are an important part of thinking-centered learning. By requiring students to develop thoughtful answers instead of merely recalling memorized responses, they teach teenagers how to exercise their imaginations and think for themselves. Docents guide students in understanding, questioning, responding, and evaluating information. By involving students in purposeful discourse, the docents guide the discussion rather than act as lecturers.

In a thinking-centered environment docents engage students using carefully planned questions and activities, encouraging their students to make discoveries and express personal judgments. As an integral part of this thoughtful learning, the docents’ task is to create an environment where teenagers may think for themselves.

Last fall, a group of twelve teenage detention students were sent to visit our museum. The docent and classroom teacher had discussed the visit together and hoped that the museum experience would result in some form of personal growth. When the docent met the students she recognized an attitude of indifference. She asked them what they were interested in seeing and gave them a choice — the paintings in the museum’s permanent collection or an exhibition of new print works. One student quickly replied that “we’re not here anyhow to see old stuff.”

The docent took a deep breath and took the students to visit the Utah “Out of Print” Exhibition. The students were paired together and asked to find a print they liked. Then they discussed the work with their partner, describing the print in detail, eventually explaining what they thought it meant.

Two students stood by I Remember When This Was a Tree, by Utah artist Bonnie Sucec. After about ten minutes of looking and discussing the work, they were asked to tell what they saw and explain how they felt. One young man began hesitantly. He described Sucec’s...
Renewal

Eleventin

The connected at stunned; docent looked himself, shoots and admitted, about and just as we began to wonder where was he going with this discussion, he stopped and began speaking more personally about the print.

He said that the tree stump was his life. That there was never a chance for him. If there had been a chance, he admitted, he didn’t take it. He was alone and afraid. Then, he said he noticed the new shoots of growth. He said the new shoots represented hope, hope for himself, hope for all of us. He tearfully looked up at his friends. They grabbed him, as if to say, we understand. The docent and the classroom teacher were stunned; the security guards were amazed at his openness. The student had connected personally with the art work.

Undoubtedly, this museum visit contributed to the cultivation of an aesthetic experience, but it did more. Post-modernist philosophy suggests that individual constructing of ideas across the discipline is a meaningful endeavor. This museum encounter went beyond the limits of the experience itself because a docent guided the visit and allowed the student to express himself. Through this thinking experience this teenager discovered himself. He looked at art; then looked within himself.

In essence, education requires an environment in which students are not asked questions for which answers are known; because if the questions involve predetermined conclusions, the process is merely training not thinking. If we consider the models put forth by Plato, Rousseau, and Dewey, for example, it is clear that an accumulation of knowledge and skills is insufficient. What is central to being educated is the ability to creatively solve problems, by learning to think.

While instilling knowledge is obviously not irrelevant, I believe that the more important question is how one enables a student to become an autonomous thinker. Education, to put it a bit tendentiously, is a process that awakens individuals and enables them to imagine conditions other than those that exist or that have existed.

Docents have such a responsibility with visitors, to develop educational initiatives that communicate the intrinsic value and aesthetic significance of art as an expression of human thought, imagination, and creativity. Such a direction fosters an environment of individual and group exploration, discovery, scholarship, and cultural awareness that enlightens teenagers.

---

Ellen Lockwood Powley is Head of Public Programs at the Brigham Young Museum of Art in Provo, Utah, where she coordinates the education and volunteer programs. Ms. Powley has trained and supervised over one thousand volunteers for two blockbuster exhibitions. A native of Pleasantville, New York, she graduated from the Eastman School of Music in Horn Performance and Music Education. She obtained a Masters of Education from Brigham Young University and is currently a Doctoral Student in Educational Leadership.

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THE DOCENT EDUCATOR
Teenagers “Living” at the Museum ... Almost

(Continued from page 9.)

are being consulted about a forthcoming exhibition on drugs. Their contribution to the preparation and content of the discovery spaces and workshops on themes of interest to them is stimulating for both parties.

Concluding Remarks

Allow us to conclude this reflection with some extract from the book of comments, symbols of commitment and solidarity witnessed by the Musée:

- “I want to go and help children of war.” [written by a 15 year old]
- “That makes two of us.” [wrote another]
- “Maybe three ...” [Catherine, 20 years old]
- “Four for sure.” [concluded Vera]
- “Five if you count me.” [signed Marie-Josée, 14 years old]
- “I’m old and sick, but you youngsters go for it!” [a seventh person added]

Maria-José des Rivieres is the Education Project Manager for the Musée de la Civilisation in Québec City, Canada. In 1995, she received the Prix d’excellence en interprétation du patrimoine with the Quebec Association for Heritage Interpretation, for the interactive guided tour entitled Quebec Women, a Great Legacy. She is also adjunct professor at the Research Center for Quebec Literature at Laval University.

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