

Education Coordinator Update- Summer 2019

Amanda Kucharek

During the months preceding school visits (Mar/April/May), I have been creating worksheets and guidelines for our volunteer docents and our visiting students. This includes “How-to” information in the case that I might not be available, with (as simple as possible) materials required.

Worksheets to be copied in black in white for mass printing, certain worksheets made re-useable by laminating and dry erase marker. Over time, I have noticed that the marker is harder to erase after it sets for a while, so better for short term projects.

I have held a brainstorm/tutorial meeting with a small group of volunteers – my rock stars who attend many days – and have circulated materials through email to the rest involved. I greatly value the input of my returning volunteers and hope to continue these kinds of brainstorms.

I have received good feedback from teachers and students who have told me that they enjoy the spring/summer lessons, or that they are personally learning a lot of new information. I have had students ask many thoughtful and relevant questions- One female student was interested in learning why the first astronauts were all male, she was pleased that the “Capcom Go” video referred to female scientists and programmers. Some students are surprised that they actually have relevant information to share. I am making more of an effort to keep our visits to the Native American gallery connected to today’s technology. Students are comparing and contrasting our 2019 tools to the artifacts found and are seeing that there is a real connection to tools that their parents keep in the garage. These ideas are evolving into new and updated programs for the future.

Looking towards the fall, I’m sticking with similar practices, although with new projects.

My main focus at the present is setting up a new “*Besser Buddies*” educational youth visitor program. Two child mascots will represent the childlike spirit of curiosity and serve as age-appropriate interpretation for our younger visitors. The boy and girl are brother and sister who both have “B” names to represent both Besser and the ability to “B” (Be) anything. They can “B” innovative, creative, bold, kind etc. These characters can be used in an activity/coloring book, free pamphlets, or fundraising material. I really like the idea of a black and white book, as the characters will be very simple, and I think many students will like coloring the Besser buddies to represent themselves.



I am currently working on outlining the most important topics. I would like to have elements of these characters in all areas of the museum, so I will be using this outline to decide what scenes have specific illustrations (Fossil Park sample above).

I've identified some "Overarching Themes" or "Big Ideas" across galleries to be factored into this material: *Community Occupations/Roles, Innovation + Creativity, Aspirational Attributes.*

Across different galleries, we'll be identifying and comparing modern occupations and roles of the past that help the viewer to understand the art/history/science concepts presented. For example, Avenue of Shops – Historian, Native American gallery – Anthropologist.

"We can learn many things by studying the past of our community. A Historian studies and analyzes history, usually specializing in one particular time period. A historian might look at old photos or newspapers to gather clues from the past to answer questions we have in the present. Genealogists study family trees to answer questions too! When we know where Alpena families came from originally, many business and street names make lots of sense. Did you know that State street used to be called "Maine" street? Not like "main"- it was named after the state of Maine because so many people moved to Michigan from Maine and most of them lived on that street."

We'll also be looking at occupations/roles of the past and comparing to relevant industries of today. For example, lumberjacks – panel processing in Alpena.

"The lumber industry was more than what the lumberjacks did- once the logs made their way to the lumberyard, skilled craftsmen like woodworkers would turn the timber into everything you would need to construct a community. Think about this: If you wanted to build a house today in 2019, where would you go? Maybe Home Depot or Walmart? We are lucky to live in a time where everything we need is sold in one store. But in early Alpena, you had to visit specialists who could sell you boards, shingles, windows, and posts. "

When we evaluate our programs, the K-4 MI Social Studies Standards Overview breaks down into grade specific contexts:

Kindergarten – *Myself and Others*

First – *Families and Schools*

Second – *The Local Community*

Third – *Michigan Studies*

Fourth – *United States Studies*

Further broken down, for example, The History aspect of MI K-4 Social Studies focuses on:

Living and Working Together – *Use historical thinking to understand the past in the local community*

Michigan History – *Use historical thinking to understand the past in Michigan*

We have an awesome and varied collection that will fulfil these student content requirements.

Our science, history, and art combined will give young learners a way to think about their connections to the community and broader world (including understanding human systems and the environment, earth and space science, refining artistic ideas in compositions).

Which leads to my next interest: a "Picture Person" Artistic Outreach Program.

I am doing research on similar programs and sample art pieces that we could adapt for our collections. I have past experience in a similar art education non-profit program after I finished college. In that scenario, several teachers visited underserved schools in rural areas to bring varied arts activities for a half-day program. In some cases, we hosted day camps. All of this was grant funded primarily through MCACA and NEA. We would have to access grants to cover additional art materials. We have a lot, but depending on participating class size, we will run short. Many other programs provide prints at a fee to cover the copyright. I think that depending on copyright, we could utilize some of our collections as prints.

Looking ahead to Fall Harvest and Season of Light – Log Cabin Event Reflections:

Front Desk/Volunteer Coordination: No major issues during event, just acclimating new/part time staff to different workflow. This year's attendees arrived in much more even fashion, not all at once, so flow was much calmer. One volunteer tasked at greeting, 2-3 working desk. YVC students had new coordinator who was good at observing/redirecting.

Notes for Future Events:

- ALL-staff meeting before major events may help to communicate between full/part time staff.
- Schedule staff at the same time for pre-meeting
- ALL Walk/tour the entire grounds before event to see locations. Walk through map.

Food Stations: Founders set up in garage with strawberry sundaes, cookies, water, pop, and popcorn. Steady turn-out, ran low on ice cream. Hot Dogs/water across the yard, 10x20 tent with seating in between. Garbage cans at each and a large one in between. Can for recyclables.

Notes for Future Events:

- Hot Dog griller noted that the beef franks are fattier, so there was a lot of grease running through the bottom of the grill. Chicken or pork franks might help, but hasn't tested the theory
- Potential Fudge/Fossil Day 2019- Either candy or fudge demonstrations
- Like strawberry social w/ ice cream, fudge brownie sundaes instead of pie for Fall

Entertainment: Harp inside the Wilson, Great Lake Effect outside on porch (returning in Fall). Face Painting under trees by the school house, well attended by families. Sun changes position, so tables were moved to the other side of the trees ½ way through afternoon. Smoke house by fire dept was fun addition. Woodworkers in Native American gallery was a good set-up for demonstrations.

Notes for Future Events:

- Music on amplifier is heard indoors, suggestions include stagnate playing/break times or moving locations.
- Smoke house could be closer to main sidewalks to draw more visitors, or spread out other booths/entertainment to lead people to that side of yard