

THE EXTRAORDINARY POWER OF PLAY



PLAY IS A POWERFUL FACTOR IN A CHILD'S HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT.

From birth, children practice and develop a wide range of skills as they play, explore, discover, and learn. Play combines thought and action and opens the door for interaction, creativity, and socialization. It's essential to family and community life.



PLAY ENCOURAGES

In a 2017 Association of Children's Museums (ACM) study of children's museum visitors from across the U.S., all respondents indicated it was highly important to discover something about their children's learning during the museum visit. The vast majority of respondents indicated they did, in fact, learn about their children's learning and thinking process, interests, and interactions because the museum gave them the opportunity to watch their child play with unique materials and activities not available at home.

In addition to providing parents and caregivers with learning insights, our museum's exhibits and programs are sought after by childcare programs and schools in our community for field trips. Collaboration with local higher education institutions also brings impactful training in play-based, informal learning to area college students, teachers, and childcare professionals.



CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Thinking clearly about what to do. Observing, asking questions, and reasoning effectively. Linking actions and effects, evaluating results and drawing conclusions.



CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Interacting effectively and respectfully with others from diverse backgrounds. Responding open-mindedly to different ideas and values. Practicing safe disagreements with others and adopting another's perspective.



CREATIVE THINKING

Imagining and generating possibilities, challenging assumptions, and finding new solutions. Improvising and creating new ideas with others.



COLLABORATION

Helping others and enlisting others' help in working toward a common goal, dividing tasks, and sharing resources and ideas.



COMMUNICATION

Actively listening and understanding what is being communicated via written and spoken words, gestures, and images. Talking with others to express feelings, share ideas, and explain reasoning.



PERSISTENCE

Being determined and sustaining efforts even in the face of challenges. Repeating actions for improved results and working through difficulties with others.



CURIOSITY AND OPEN-MINDEDNESS

A natural active interest in the world, learning and understanding what is not immediately apparent.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES



EXHIBITS AND ENVIRONMENTS

Large-scale, physical settings that engage children and adults in interactive, self-directed, shared learning experiences. These year-round activities can be explored over time during multiple visits.



INITIATIVES

Collaboration with multiple partners in seasonally inspired activities that allow the museum to better serve its audience. Initiatives offer the museum an opportunity to respond to timely issues, build awareness around a topic, or deepen its impact.



LIVE PROGRAMS

Workshops, performances, drop-in programs, and field trips that engage children and adults in active hands-on exploration. Facilitated by staff, volunteers, and guest presenters, Live Programs are time-limited experiences using special materials, tools, or techniques.



OUTREACH

Activities that connect selected museum offerings with children, parents, caregivers, and educators at parks and festivals, in schools, and other community venues. Outreach extends the museum's reach across the region to increase its access.



A CO-LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER

A space that supports shared learning opportunities for the museum and its partners, such as internships, practicum placements, community service, volunteering, and research projects with higher education institutions.

“Children’s museums are a ‘third space’ for children after family and school. A space that generates an atmosphere of joy that accompanies unencumbered exploration. This unleashes the discovery of new ideas, skills, and new understandings of the world.”

Glen Palm
Faculty Emeritus
Child & Family Studies
St. Cloud State University

“Play is the process that allows children to discover and investigate their expanding world. Play experiences promote excitement and curiosity in children that help them grow into life-long learners.”

Deb Campbell
Retired Early Childhood Director
Sauk Rapids-Rice Schools