

North Carolina

MAMEA Mini-Conference: 1/23/09



Conference attendance breakdown:
6 classroom teachers, 20 informal educators

Round Table Discussion:

Goals for Successful Field Trips - Making the Most of Informal Education Resources

Discussion Questions:

- *What do teachers need from a visit to a museum or other information education facility?
- *What fieldtrip follow through do students need in order to get the most from the experience?
- *How to information educators provide what teachers need?
- *What should classroom teachers know about informal education facility realities, limitations?
- *How to narrow the gap between what teachers & informal educators expect of one another?

Notes Compiled by JoAnne Powell and Carol Hopper Brill

Top Requests:

- *Collaborations and partnerships with schools. Facility educators attend staff meetings at the schools to promote what the facility has to offer or coordinate with the school science coordinator on integrating with curriculum.
- *Facility educators that coordinate with the school about the needs of each grade and standard course of study for the grades.
- *Fieldtrip planning tips for teachers, information on the etiquette of the facility, to share with the students & chaperones
- *Pre-trip guide to the facility, program content, exhibit information/guides & facility floor plans and maps, worksheets.
- *Better communications from both sides to improve planning, implementation, follow-through.

A. What Do Teachers Want?

1. Booking the visit

- * It is difficult for teachers to get permission and funds to go on a fieldtrip
- * Teachers have many administrative and logistical challenges in getting the students to the facility. They must plan months ahead then try to confirm their dates and itinerary with administrators.
- * Really need greater flexibility so that there are back-up options or alternatives for their group if they are late or have other complications.
 - a. Need to share these possibilities with the facilities, so alternatives can be anticipated
 - b. Need to improve communications with facility so news of last minute issues get to the educators.
- * Field trips are often scheduled in spring as a reward and at a time when they know students better. Though this means a more difficult time finding a slot & more crowded facilities.
- * To avoid crowds and receive more personal attention/special request programs:
Informal educators recommend that teachers schedule fieldtrip during quieter months like Jan-Feb.

2. Teachers want a field experience that cannot be offered in their school, with artifacts or resources that the classroom does not have.

- * Have staff/volunteer welcome the group and introduce the site
 - Just "Hello and you're on your own," is not helpful or appreciated
- * Teachers/students want to see exhibits
- * They want to have a hands-on experience with knowledgeable staff from the facility
- * Self-guided tours are ok if the worksheet or "scavenger hunt" is well done/meaningful
- * Pre/post visit lessons are valuable for students to learn from trip

*Outreach to schools as follow-up on the fieldtrip would really help reinforce the content

3. Better communications on both sides

- * Make sure teachers have site contact # and a call from the teacher gets through to an educator (not just the admissions desk).
- * If a tour company is booking the visit arrangements, make sure the tour company rep shares the teacher's name and contact number with the site and educators.
- * NC Aquariums are preparing a 3 minute video to prepare teachers and students for visit and NC Sea Grant & NC Maritime Museum have a handout on "How to be a Great Chaperone."
- * Teachers should communicate with site educator before visit – need to clarify expectations, program objectives, behavior and other expectations in advance.
- *Informal educators could improve effectiveness of programs: by learning more about the sequence of teacher's teaching units, the standard course of study. This would allow fieldtrips and support materials to be more targeted to and integrated with classroom work. See DPI for the standard course of study. Teachers should tell the facility educator what the students are studying in their classroom curriculum.

4. Finding funding for fieldtrips

- *School funding for fieldtrips is very limited and teachers don't have much time to write grants.
- *But, teachers and institutions can partner on a grant to support a fieldtrip. Informal educators often have skill/experience writing grants. Institutions could write the boilerplate sections of a grant so that teachers could cut/paste this into their funding request – would save time and provide appropriate wording.
- *Other sources of field trip funding:
 - a. Target department store has a field trip grant
 - b. School yard presentation projects through www.APNEP.org
 - c. Carolina Ocean Studies does a free boat cruise for teachers to learn their procedures

5. Can MAMEA help with communications by providing a timely and responsive way of sharing discussions, including this one?

- *MAMEA has a traditional website, an E-mail Discussion List (to be cleaned out & reset soon) & now a Facebook page that can allow teacher discussion
- *Notes from this discussion will be posted, we will let you all know where to find it

B. What do informal educators want/need teachers to know?

1. Our facilities have carrying capacity – can only accommodate a limited number of students in a fixed amount of time. They don't have great flexibility during busy season, so when groups are late, may not be able to admit them if another group has started.
 - *Can work on reschedule a group later in the day or offer alternative activities, but this depends on good communications.
2. Facilities can offer more flexibility and services for a group if they visit late fall through winter
 - *Need to figure out how market the off-season to teachers so they know this is the best time to schedule field trip and to be accommodated
3. Need to be assured that all the fieldtrip planning documents and instructions have reached the teacher in charge.
 - *Need direct communications with the teacher organizing the fieldtrip
 - *Need teacher to share all fieldtrip information with other teachers bringing students on the fieldtrip, and with the chaperones regarding their rules and responsibilities.
 - *If a tour company makes the arrangements for the fieldtrip, need to establish communications with the actual teacher who will be on site for the fieldtrip.
 - *Teachers could maintain cell phone contact with site regarding arrival time and make sure a line of communication is open between site educators and teacher.
 - *Facility/Site should let teachers know what they expect from teacher/groups & Educators should communicate with the teacher before the visit.
 - a. A controlled group gets the most from their visit

- b. Sites should include a page on-line “what is expected of teachers and students during their visit.”
 - c. Send teachers “How to Prepare Students for their Visit.” Visit etiquette guidelines
 - * Provide facility and teacher guide for teacher
4. Educators can attend teacher meetings to foster communication, collaborations and partnerships
- *Try to match programming with the teacher’s curriculum
 - *Research DPI’s yearlong curriculum to see what might be emphasized throughout the year. See Pacing and Sequence Guide.
 - *Program registrar should ask teacher what expectations he/she has for visit
 - *Could design different programs for each grade level, i.e. earth science, life science, math. Rather than one-size fits all programming.