

A Preschool and a Children's Museum Partners in Promoting Learning

In 2005 the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh partnered with Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) Early Childhood Education Program to open two early childhood classrooms inside the museum. When the museum was being remodeled, the executive director of the museum worked with the executive director of PPS Early Childhood Program to create a permanent space for preschool classrooms in the museum. This collaboration reflects one of the museum's key values—children should play with real materials and have numerous opportunities for hands-on play and learning.

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PATTI BARTOLLI has worked in early childhood education for 17 years, including eight years as a classroom teacher at the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh.

KIMBERLY R. RUSSO, MEd, has worked in early childhood education for more than 12 years. Before becoming an administrator, Kim taught preschool in Virginia and Pennsylvania and had the privilege of teaching in one of the classrooms at the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh.



Preschool teachers and museum staff work together to plan how to use the museum exhibits to reinforce and extend the preschool curriculum. The museum staff gain a consistent audience that gives feedback on exhibits and programs. The museum invites the children to test out new materials.

The program has its own classrooms, but children also have access to the entire museum. The children spend about one hour each morning in the museum before the regular museum visitors arrive. They play in different areas, spending time in the exhibits that connect with what they are doing in their classes. During a study on food, for example, the museum café's chef taught children about the kitchen tools he uses.

The next traveling exhibit at the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh is "XOXO—An Exhibit About Love and Forgiveness," opening February 14, 2014.

Garage

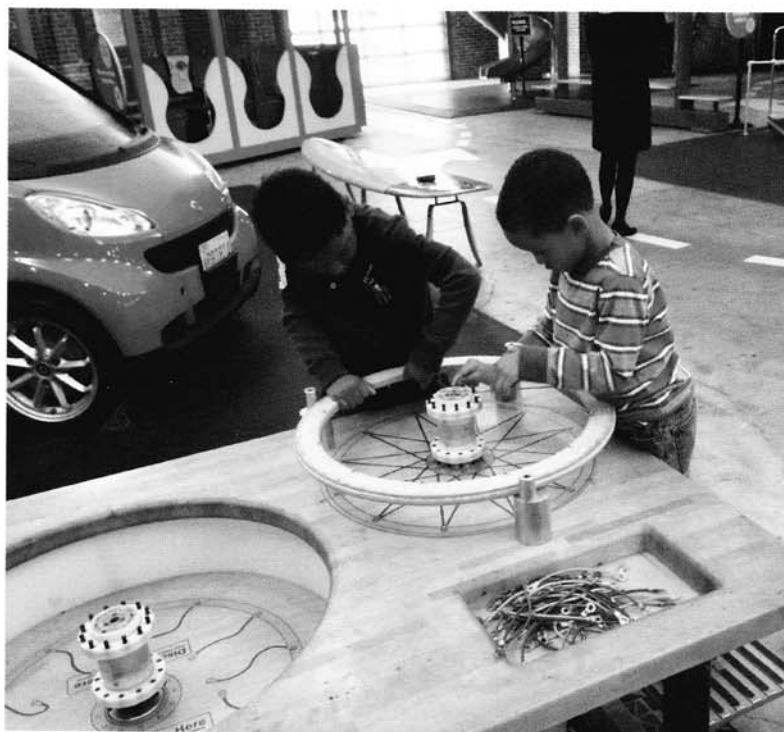
Learning domains: math, science, gross motor

In conjunction with the transportation unit, preschoolers explore wheels, parachutes, a trolley, and a smart car, learning about exploration and the science of movement. Movement is a large part of the garage area. Children learn how to use tools and equipment, explore the concept of gravity, and use their imaginations as they put together and test their own wheels and magnetic cars and transport materials by way of pulleys.

Water play

Learning domains: science, technology

Children experiment with concepts such as sinking, floating, movement, and changing of properties. The museum's water play area offers a water-mover wheel, magnets, a vortex, and more. Children use technology to see water drops up close.



TapeScape

Learning domains: art, gross motor

This traveling exhibit gave children the opportunity to observe a different use of an everyday material. The clear packing tape was transformed into a large structure that children could climb in, on, and around.



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picturing good practice

Backyard

Learning domains: science, health, music, gross motor

Children investigate soil, plants, and wildlife. They use their senses to learn, draw, and describe the world around them. They especially enjoy observing insects and drawing and writing about plant growth.

Tough Art

Learning domains: social-emotional

This collection includes original, interactive art built for children. With "Reach," children touch parts of the exhibit to create music. To make more than one sound, children must hold hands and work together. "Reach" encourages children to explore low and high sounds and discuss height.



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Studio

Learning domains: art, math

The studio area encourages explorations through open-ended art activities. The museum offers a variety of materials, and children can engage in multi-step projects. At the "Arts Bar," children make 2- and 3-dimensional art.



The program involves families by inviting them to volunteer in the classroom or in the museum with the class.

Other programs can implement some of these ideas by thinking about familiar materials in new ways. Children and teachers can replicate TapeScape on a smaller scale by using packing tape.

An open mind facilitates successful collaboration. Effective early childhood educators explore every opportunity to further young children's education. **TYC**

