

## Recommended Reading:

### Informal/Free-Choice Learning and Field Trip Strategies

Falk, J.H. and Dierking, L.D. 2000. *Learning from museums: Visitor experiences and the making of meaning*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.

Falk and Dierking present their contextual model of learning, emphasizing three dimensions of the personal, the physical and the sociocultural, interacting with each other through the fourth dimension of time. Three additional principles include that learning begins with the individual; learning involves others; and learning takes place somewhere. This sounds complex, but is presented lucidly, illustrated with many examples from research and personal anecdote pertaining to how people learn in museums and on their own.

----- . 2002. *Lessons without limit: How free-choice learning is transforming education*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.

Further promotion of Falk & Dierking's model, this time with the emphasis on understanding free-choice learning dynamics in order to promote lifelong learning skills. Sometimes they bang the drum too hard (their Institute for Learning Innovation consultancy firm [<http://www.ilinet.org>] depends on other people buying this model), but their work makes sense and provides useful tools.

Griffin, J. 2004. Research on students and museums: Looking more closely at the students in school groups. *Science Education* 88(Suppl.1): S59-S70.

Published online in Wiley Interscience  
(<http://www.interscience.wiley.com>).

A highlight from an extremely valuable special issue focusing on field trips and informal learning, with principles relevant to any classroom (not just for science). Applies research into how families learn together in museums to strategies for classroom field trips.

Hannon, K. and Randolph, A. 1999. *Collaborations between museum educators and classroom teachers: Partnerships, curricula, and student understanding*.

Charlottesville: University of Virginia, Curry School of Education.

This research report uses a literature survey, interviews with museum educators, and discussions with classroom teachers to analyze the nature of collaborations. Five topics organizing the study include persons who collaborate and their roles; reasons for collaborations; types of collaborations; collaborations and the school curriculum; and collaborations and student understanding.

Hein, G.E. and Alexander, M. 1998. *Museums: Places of learning*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums Education Committee.

This 56-page booklet outlines museum visitor research, educational theory, and education in museums. Hein and Alexander offer constructivism as a strong model for

- museum education programs, citing museums as the ideal setting for combining active learning strategies with personal meaning-making.
- Hirzy, E.C. (Ed.). 1996. *True needs, True partners: Museums and schools transforming education*. Washington, D.C.: Institute of Museum Services (now the Institute of Museum and Library Services).  
This well-written report from a major study of the effectiveness of IMS grants for museum-school partnerships provides a wealth of material from real-world experience, as well as useful principles for forming effective partnerships of your own. Available online in PDF format from <http://www.imls.gov/pdf/pubtntb.pdf>.
- Kisiel, J.F. 2003. Teachers, museums, and worksheets: A closer look at a learning experience. *Journal of Science Education* 14(1): 3-21.  
Another useful study from our colleagues teaching science. While many teachers (and museum educators) devise worksheets to help structure and focus student time in museums, Kisiel uncovers deleterious effects of tying inquiry to a narrowly defined task.
- Krishnaswami, Uma. 2002. *Beyond the field trip: Teaching and learning in public places*. North Haven: Linnet Professional Publications.  
Krishnaswami brings her years of classroom experience to this well-written presentation of practical strategies for designing vibrant field trip experiences that enhance and extend classroom work while servicing academic standards. She uses the National Parks system as her setting for field trips, but the principles can be applied to any out-of-classroom experience.
- Leinhardt, G. and Knutson, K. 2004. *Listening in on museum conversations*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.  
The authors use a sociocultural model of learning as a form of multi-leveled conversation to shape their research into how people learn in museums. The presentation is a bit dense and academic, but the snippets of actual conversations recorded in museums provide fascinating insights.
- Schneider, B.P. 2003. *Making the informal formal: An examination of why and how teachers and students leverage experiences in informal learning environments*. Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University.  
Definitely worth looking up in ERIC. Schneider shaped her study by collecting teacher visions for how to use informal learning with their students, comparing those visions with the strategies and ideals of museum educators, and analyzing how those combined visions played out in practice. "Since much of what visitors ultimately take away from an informal setting is influenced by subsequent experience, the ways teachers appropriate informal learning to practice is critical."
- Sheppard, B. (Ed.). 1993. *Building museum & school partnerships*. Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Federation of Museums and Historical Organizations.  
This collection of brief articles from teachers and museum educators is refreshingly realistic and practical, with sections such as "What Do Schools Want from Museums?" and "Hands-On, Hands-Off: Strategies for Active Participation."