

METRO MUSEUM SCHOOL

Section 1: The student experience

Imagine a learning environment that combines the energy of a dynamic children's museum with a real-world 'learning laboratory', with museum resources as the object of study and as the outlet for concept application: museums and classrooms are parallel learning environments and the community is the campus. Whether engaged in 'learning expeditions' at a cultural site or interacting directly with museum resources in their cultural "home base" classroom, students work on an in-depth curriculum-based project with their teacher and a museum curator or educator. Students are confronted by primary source idea - an authentic object a scientific phenomenon, or an artistic interpretation. Then they undertake the 'museum learning model' in which they apply their classroom concepts and content to explore, analyze and question, synthesize, model, present, and reflect. This project culminates in a presentation or 'interpretive representation' offered to other students, teachers, parents, and museum audiences as well.

Like actual museum educators and curators do, students will define the project, they will establish the questions that need to be explored and the solutions that need to be found, and they will determine the desired outcomes. They create the work plan, they research, analyze and interpret information and they uncover and apply that information to the project. Students develop and test solutions, build models that express their ideas, argue and defend their solution with teammates, and arrive at a solution or finished project. As part of their concept application process, students utilize literacy, history, math, science, technology, art & design. Since analyzing and constructing solutions to the problems developed by the students depend upon having a firm foundation of core content to build upon, the Museum School sets aside time for core academic instruction geared specifically to state standards; student projects regularly incorporate English language arts, math and computational thinking.

An active collaboration

The Metro Museum School is a collaboration, and cultural partners are expected and committed to playing a proactive role in creating and maintaining the student experience. To that end, a Cultural Partner Council will be comprised at the time of this writing of representatives from Blue Apple Players, Frazier History Museum, Kentucky Museum of Art & Craft, and the Kentucky Science Center and will

provide functions that assist with full and streamlined integration of area cultural resources, curriculum planning and support. This Council, along with the School Principal, parent representatives and several faculty reps, will form a School-Based Decision-Making Council (SBDM) to provide the customary duties of an SBDM. A seat on the Cultural Council is an ongoing role and it presumes that each named organization dedicates, annually, a specific individual to serve in this liaison capacity. This person is assigned to work actively both with the school and with community partners in order to ensure effective, ongoing cultural partner integration. This person is also assigned to be actively involved in annual planning of curriculum and student experience each school year, ensuring that community cultural partners are brought to the planning table in the most appropriate ways in order to leverage specifically relevant expertise or assets based on course of study and to uphold the pedagogical intent of the Metro Museum School.

Engaged Cultural Partners are those who have been actively involved in the dialogue and planning of the Metro Museum School during the School of Innovation Competition phase, and those who's Boards of Directors have offered a pledge of support for seeing the school successfully launched and sustained. At the time of this writing, "Engaged cultural partners" are: Actor's Theater, Blue Apple Players, Frazier Museum, Louisville Visual Arts Association, Louisville Zoo, Muhammad Ali Center, Kentucky Center for the Arts, Kentucky Museum of Art & Craft, the YMCA, Louisville Free Public Library, and Kentucky Science Center. These "engaged cultural partners" will have routine and ongoing links to the school curriculum and student experience, by offering some combination of building access, programmatic support, teacher support, content expertise, or physical assets that elevate student course of study. Annually, "cultural partner agreements" will be developed and valued, based on specific scope of services in order to provide reasonable compensation to cultural partners for the services and resources provided within this plan.

Additionally, other cultural partners – Occasional Partners- will engage with the Museum School on an as-needed basis, driven by specifics of the curriculum modules. These are institutions are no less enthusiastic about the school concept, but they may be farther away in proximity or may have more specialized content offerings relevant only to specific topics or themes. At the time of this writing, Occasional Partners include Sons of the American Revolution, Portland Museums, Riverside: Farnsley-Mormon Landing, and many others who will likely be linked situation-by-situation to the school.

“Tisha’s Experience” at the Metro Museum School; 4th grade perspective

How would this approach play out in a typical 9 week cycle of a museum school student? Tisha is a 4th grade student at the Metro Museum School. She and her classmates meet their Museum School teachers at a convenient JCPS location every morning at 8:45 where they board their Museum School bus.

Yesterday, Tisha and her class had spent the day at their home base, the Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft thinking about and exploring ideas around a new theme module, *Landscape and the Natural Environment* from the perspective of one of Tisha’s favorite books “Meet the Drakes on the Kentucky Frontier” by John Loeper+. This book inspired them to approach the theme from a cultural perspective: how the people who came before us were influenced by the land and the environment, and how that compares to, and influences, us today.

As she and her classmates read and analyze the story details about the characters, settings and events portrayed in the book over the next 9 weeks, they will plan out the ‘learning expeditions’ to area museums to gather data and other source material to construct what will become a museum exhibition illustrating their work.

Today, it’s Tuesday, and their first “learning expedition” takes them to the Frazier History Museum. Ms Jones uses the bus time for students to review their initial thoughts from the work completed at KMAC the day before and talk about the questions they will explore at the Frazier. Arriving at the Museum, educators facilitate a workshop where students examine objects from pioneer Kentucky with a focus on cultural perspectives and hardships that the objects were used to address. They get to read actual pioneer diaries and study old photographs, too.

They walk a block down Main Street to the KMAC for lunch, then they break into groups to spend the rest of the afternoon reviewing the materials and research they gathered at the Frazier, fitting the information into their growing concept map that will eventually form the basis for a museum exhibition.

+Gr 3-5-Based on fact and depict the lives of the Drake family, who moved to the unsettled Kentucky frontier in 1781, and the Ward family, who traveled on the Oregon Trail in the 1850s. The Drakes' eldest son, Dan, dreamed of being a doctor, but was expected to follow in his father's footsteps and become a farmer. The Wards' youngest son suffered from chronic illness and was so weakened by the journey across the United States that he almost died, but was saved by herbs the family got from the Indians they met along the way. These personal experiences not only make the books more interesting, but also allow readers to identify with and understand the experiences of their ancestors. While there is some blurring between fact and fiction, and some of the vocabulary is too difficult for the intended audience, the books will appeal to young readers. They have attractive full-color illustrations and photographs of reconstructed sites, detailed indexes, and lists for further reading and historical places to visit, as well as songs and recipes from the time period. (This book is on the approved list for social studies literature, JCPS)

Wednesday takes Tisha and her class to the YMCA to start her morning with fitness and exercise. Then it's off to the library for 'Math Camp.' Math Camp lets Tisha pretend to be all sorts of people and today, she's an historian who is studying an old Native American settlement very similar to one described in the Drake novel. As an historian, she needs to figure out how many people probably lived there. So far she has found 5 shelters that look like 6 people lived in each one, and 6 larger lodges that seemed to house 8 people. Tisha does the math: 78 people lived in this settlement. But does that make this settlement a large city or a small one? In comparison to what? So she finds a book in the Library that indicates the Native American population of Kentucky in the 1780's was about 6500 people. Doing the math, Tisha finds her settlement represents about 10% of the population. Back to KMAC for lunch, and more analysis, investigation, and more questions to be explored!

It's Thursday, and Tisha starts her day at Blue Apple Players. Through music and drama, they re-create the kinds of entertainment and social activities the Drake family loved to do. They analyze the dependence much of the entertainment was on the landscape, and its resources. After lunch, they spend their KMAC time analyzing their thoughts from the morning, examining objects from collections, and using natural materials combined with a study of shapes, symmetry and scale, build reproductions of simple toys and games the Drake children might have played with.

The busy week ends with the entire day spent at KMAC where they integrate core learning with their project concepts. They collected much information, generated even more questions than they started with and have a lot to compile. Tisha is intrigued by a piece her teacher shows the class painted by contemporary artist Claire Shermans. "How do we 'read' our landscapes differently between pictures and reality?" her teacher asks? Tisha loves the lively discussion about artistic process amongst the students over how interpretation of landscapes reflect and express our perception. She is fascinated that when an artist paints a landscape she is also interpreting it. These interpretations can be traced historically by looking at historical pictures at the Frazier Museum. She also discovers that paints have changed over time and this effects how paintings are made. Tisha have the option to do further research on the chemistry behind paints.

Educators from the Kentucky Science Center come by to help her class finish their concept map, using post-it-notes to link ideas and questions together to form a narrative, or what the museum educators call

a Verbal Storyboard. They identify more resources they need to visit to develop their exhibit theme. On the bus going back, Ms Jones, as she does every afternoon, leads a backwards review discussion and together they generate their investigation plan for next week.

Over the next 8 weeks, Tisha's class will spend much time planning and doing investigations that will eventually become a museum exhibit. They visit the Louisville Zoo to explore habitats and ecosystems. Educators from the Frazier History museum present objects and artifacts from their collection to illustrate adaptation and explore differences in different native cultures. Artists from Louisville Visual Arts will show them how to apply illustrative and artistic techniques to create a huge mural contrasting the Kentucky landscape between the 1780's and today; Muhammad Ali Center help them understand and communicate how our belief systems today, and those of the Drake family, contribute to our relationship to our environment and our culture. And having a home base at the KMAC provides them with the focused core learning that forms the critical content foundation upon which to investigate, analyze, and construct and express solutions to the questions generated around their central concept.

Section 2: How the Metro Museum School Works

The school serves grades 3rd through 5th and each grade level will feature two classes, with a student/teacher ratio of approximately 30:1 per class. The students always start and end their day at a school (to be selected) from which they are bused either to the home base location Mondays and Fridays, or to a cultural partner on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays for a morning spent on a learning expedition, library, or to the YMCA or area park for health and fitness. The students' home base is one of three cultural institutions, the Kentucky Science Center for 3rd grade, Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft for 4th, and the Ali Center for 5th.