NEWS FROM LEARNING PROGRAMS

Local Teachers Explore Syria and Iraq

A series of professional development sessions throughout the summer fostered deeper understanding of Middle Eastern cultures for local teachers. Tours and activities in the Cultures in the Crossfire exhibition allowed teachers to connect past with present. Two collaborations with Penn’s Middle East Center placed the Museum’s exhibitions and researchers in the forefront of teacher learning. Experts such as Dyson Associate Curator Dr. Lauren Ristvet provided information on ancient Middle Eastern traditions, as well as current practices in archaeology and the protection of cultural heritage. Teachers were able to preview and prototype workshops that will be released in April 2018 with the opening of the Middle East Galleries; they also practiced object-based learning and visual literacy skills. School superintendents in the Center for School Study Councils class from Penn’s Graduate School of Education considered how they could look at their own work with fresh eyes and become more aware of their individual perspectives and values.

New Global Guides Program Coming Soon

Through a grant from the Barra Foundation, of Wayne, PA, the Penn Museum will launch a new, three-year program, Global Guides: Immigrant Stories Tour program, that will train immigrants and refugees to give guided interpretation of galleries showcasing collections from their country of origin. The program goals are to expand opportunities for people to share their culture with audiences, deepen public understanding of the cultural heritage in our collection and its connections to contemporary issues, and to increase diversity at the Museum by including immigrants and refugees.

This new program promises to bring fresh insight to our collection from personal cultural heritage perspectives, drawing connections between the past and present, and will foster stronger community relationships with those who have cultural heritage displayed here. The Museum will partner with the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) and Nationalities Service Center.

In its first year, the Museum will pilot the project in the new Middle East Galleries, then apply it to our refreshed Mexico & Central America and Africa Galleries in the following years. The general public will have multiple opportunities to engage in tours with a Global Guide for free, and community members will have opportunities for sponsored trips.
Unpacking the Past Finishes Third Year

In the program’s first three years, *Unpacking the Past* educators have visited over 700 classrooms in 89 Philadelphia schools and sponsored 315 unique field trips to the Penn Museum. This program, which is completely free to schools, has enabled over 15,000 middle school students and hundreds of teachers to visit the Penn Museum and view our world-renowned collection of ancient artifacts from across the globe. In addition, *Unpacking the Past* has made a concerted effort to create programming that supports all students, offering specialized programs to 1,492 students in Autistic, Life Skills, and Multiple Disability Support classrooms across the city.

Program assessment allowed us to better understand the professional development experience of teachers, interview our community partners to see our neighborhood impact, and evaluate the participating students directly. Over 75% of teachers reported that they had/would refine their classroom practice because of the content presented during an *Unpacking the Past* lesson or Museum visit. Teachers’ practice was impacted in two main ways: 1) increased content knowledge and understanding of lesson applications, and 2) refined educational pedagogy by using more hands-on, inquiry-based teaching methods. Student responses to post-visit survey questions show that almost two-thirds want to know more, or have been inspired to learn more about, ancient Egypt and other past civilizations. Over 50 percent of the students would like to return to the Museum to explore more of the collections and building. When asked what more they would want to know or see, students provided thoughtful responses such as, “I still want to know why Egyptians believed in the afterlife when a Pharaoh or person dies” and, “How and where did you get the mummies?”

Museum Teaching Collection Revitalized

Teaching Collection objects are heavily used by Public Programs, Learning Programs, and Academic Engagement for workshops, tours, classes, and outreach activities, not to mention the popular Artifact Loan Box program. Artifact Loan Boxes are comprised of replica objects that come from the Penn Museum’s Teaching Collection. These special artifacts can be handled without gloves and are appropriate for all ages and a variety of learning environments.

After extensive assessment and documentation, the Museum’s collection of teaching objects is back in action. In the 2016–17 school year, 61 Artifact Loan Boxes were rented, serving 7,104 students—a 177% increase over the previous year! Mancala boards donated in 2015 by Doug Polumbaum and Risa Korris were used for mancala ornaments at schools. *Unpacking the Past* teachers were given free access to Artifact Loan Boxes to support their students’ studies of ancient Egypt and Rome. In a collaboration between Academic Engagement and Group Sales, two summer interns created “capsule collection” workshops for use in the Collections Study Room by adult groups.