

At the Conner Prairie Interactive History Park, visitors to the Create.Connect exhibition can use “make and test” activities developed in collaboration with the Science Museum of Minnesota. As one part of the evaluation of this exhibition, the team identified five indicators that suggest learning and that the activities should promote. The team did not expect the presence of these behaviors to guarantee that learning was occurring, but the activities were designed to promote learning through these behaviors and their absence would signal problems. These indicators are an example of one way a team quickly evaluated an exhibition that included making activities.

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Indicators and Protocol

Observe the individual at the element, watching for the target behaviors that are listed in the box associated with the element. You only record if the behavior happened or not, not how many times it happened. The behavior definitions are as follows:

Work with the items - the guest manipulates the object(s) in a hands-on way. Only record this behavior if the guest actually touches the objects.

Iteration - Iteration involves improving through testing. The guest uses information or experience to adjust their creation. For example, a guest making a windmill, testing it with wind, and then adjusting the blades is iteration. However, trying on different blades without testing is not iteration. Creating a ball run, running the ball down it, and adjusting an element afterwards is iteration. Adjusting the ball run elements without some form of testing is not iteration. Flying the same paper airplane multiple times is not iteration unless the visitor makes a change to the airplane in between flights. Doing one activity multiple times is counted as iteration with the assumption that they are trying a new method.

Interact with a facilitator - The guest speaks to an interpreter/facilitator or they speak to the guest. This can happen at any element.

Reach a natural endpoint of the activity - the guest is successful in reaching an intended outcome for the activity. This occurs at activity tables and benches.

- Making a windmill that spins on its own with the wind from the fan
- Making a working circuit
- Making an airplane that has all the necessary parts and testing it
- Making a chain-reaction invention that has at least 3 steps and works (you can use your judgment here- for little kids a simpler machine might be their endpoint if they worked hard at it and look like they are celebrating)

Multi-generational collaboration - the guest works together with a person not of their generation (i.e. if the target is a child, they work with an adult. If the target is an adult, they work with a child). Record this behavior even if the adult appears

to be observing intently but is not actually interacting with the activity. Do not record this behavior if the adult is nearby but does not observe the target individual (i.e. if they are on their phone, having a conversation, etc.). This behavior does not need to be ongoing to be checked- if it happens once, record it. This can happen at any element.

