

Immerse Final Report.

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RAPIDS
PUBLIC
MUSEUM

Program Summary and Evaluation.

2022/2023



grpm.org

▼ Overview:

The Grand Rapids Public Museum's (GRPM) Immerse program provides a week-long learning experience for schools from the West Michigan region. The experience is crafted and led by the visiting teachers, leveraging exhibition spaces, Museum artifacts and various enrichment programs. Teachers are trained and supported through a rigorous orientation program in the summer and an individualized planning session with Museum Education staff.

The opportunities for teachers to achieve customized learning objectives are endless. Classes can select from a variety of staff-led guided education programs and fascinating planetarium presentations, all aligned with grade-level curriculum standards. Immerse teachers also have access to 11 thematic artifact kits with lessons and background information that they can use in their own classrooms. All together, the GRPM Immerse experience provides students with local, hands-on examples of history, science and culture. These experiences connect them deeply to their curriculum and community.



▼ Numbers:

The 2022/2023 Immerse cohort included:

- 57 classes, grades 2nd through 6th
- 1371 students from 27 schools across:

6 public school districts

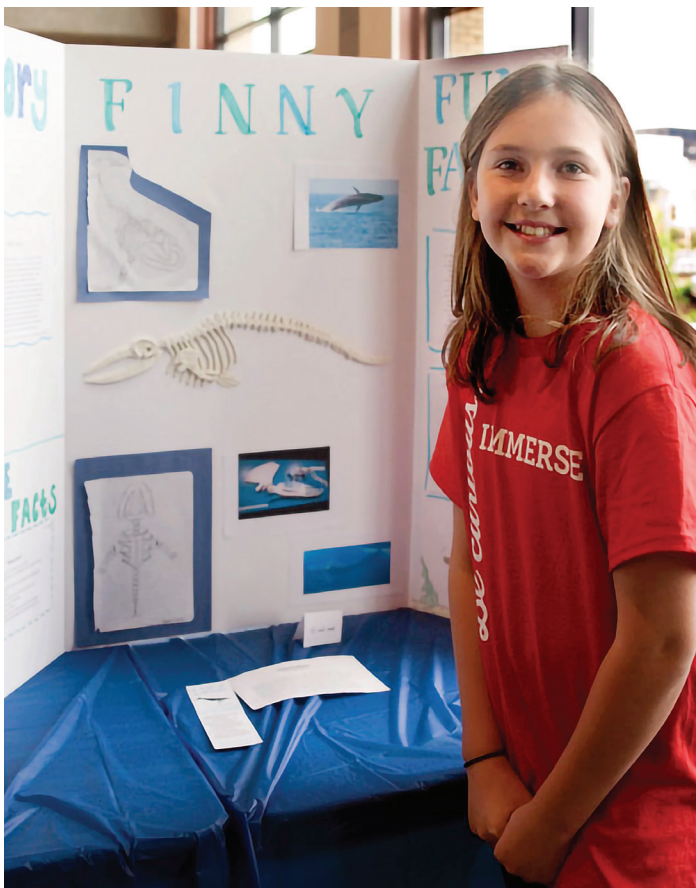
Forest Hills Public Schools
Godfrey-Lee Public Schools
Grand Rapids Public Schools
Grandville Public Schools
Kentwood Public Schools
Rockford Public Schools

7 private schools

Lake Michigan Academy
Living Stones Academy
St. Anthony of Padua
St. Patrick Parnell
St. Thomas the Apostle
The Potter's House
West Side Christian School

2 charter schools

Grand Rapids Child Discovery Center
Ridge Park Charter Academy



▼ Educational Programming at the GRPM

GRPM educational programs are centered on a constructivist, student-centered learning philosophy that aims to highlight unique historical artifacts and scientific specimens to provide concrete connections to classroom topics at local, national and global levels. This approach utilizes inquiry-based instructional strategies, allowing students to grapple with the content and generate understandings individually and as a class – a process that is accessible and inclusive of the varying perspectives and cultural differences learners bring into the Museum.



▼ Guided Education Programs:

Explore – These guided explorations will help students hone their skills to become museum learners for life.

- Explore: Exhibits, Community Archives and Research Center Tour

Investigate – Hands-on primary source investigations will help students unveil the stories held in the Museum's artifact and specimen Collections.

- Anishinabe Cultural Artifacts, Civil War Artifacts, Historical Grand River Artifacts, Plant & Animal Adaptations

STEAM – Students will learn about a variety of science, technology, engineering, art/design, and math concepts, utilizing innovative Museum technology and inquiry-based experiments.

- Beyond Escher's Universe, Design with littleBits, Grand River Community Decision-Making, Grand River Water Quality Lab, Making Sense of your Senses

Discover – This series of diverse, place-based programs emphasize where local examples of history, culture, and science can be found in the Museum and in the city of Grand Rapids.

- The First People of this Place, Grand Rapids Then & Now, Habitat Connections, River of Time, West Michigan's Newcomers

Connect – Storytelling, empathizing, perspective-taking and augmented reality will push students to engage at a deep level with GRPM exhibits.

- Augmented Reality Adventure to Victorian Grand Rapids, Practicing Empathy, Sturgeon Excursion, Through the Eyes of a Fur Trader

Supplementary planetarium presentations in the Roger B. Chaffee Planetarium are also available. All of the shows feature the latest Digistar projection technology and immersive surround sound, creating unforgettable experiences where students can discover the wonders of outer space while learning grade-level science content. Immerse classes see one presentation each day.

Immerse participants also have access to all three floors of exhibits and supplementary materials such as self-guided scavenger hunts, student worksheets and teaching guides. In the 2022-23 school year, the GRPM welcomed three phenomenal traveling exhibits: *Celebration of Souls: Day of the Dead in Southern Mexico*, *Fashion + Nature*, and *The Power of Poison*.

▼ Accessibility

The GRPM respects, values and honors the unique attributes, characteristics and perspectives that make each person who they are. We strive to prioritize both physical and cognitive accessibility in all programming, designing experiences that are inclusive to the broadest range of people in the communities we serve. Some accessibility features include:

- The Museum provides Aira, an app-based verbal description service that connects people who are blind or have low vision to remote agents to guide them through the Museum.
- The Museum offers hearing-assist technology in the Chaffee Planetarium and the Meijer Theater.
- The Museum has partnered with KultureCity to train team members to assist guests with sensory needs. Sensory tools such as noise-canceling headphones, weighted lap pads and fidget spinners can be checked out at the front desk.

Visit grpm.org/accessibility for a complete list of accessibility features.



▼ Teacher Enrichment and Training

An important aspect of Immerse is teacher professional development and the program's ability to bring together a collaborative community of practice. Teachers in the cohort learn how to leverage exhibit spaces, primary sources and objects in their instruction. They are able to collaborate with museum professionals and other educators to bring their creative ideas to life.

Teachers are supported with access to a shared resource folder which has materials related to object-based learning and exhibit exploration strategies, activity packets, thought organizers and planning tools. There is also a compiled resource bank of teacher-created materials, allowing classroom teachers to learn from and teach each other.

Educators seek out the Immerse program as a one-of-a-kind experience, knowing it will have a major impact on their students. At our virtual kick-off orientation in June 2022, we asked teachers to answer the prompt, **"What's the most important takeaway you'd like your students to get out of the GRPM Immerse program?"**

Here are a few of their answers:

▼ *My hope for the upcoming year is that students experience deep joy in being at the museum, and learn independently about the world around them while reading and exploring exhibits.*

▼ *The most important takeaway I would like students to get out of IMMERSE is a connection to their place in the world, Michigan, and our city.*

▼ *I would like my students to realize that learning can take place anywhere! I'd like them to see how our in-class learning connects to the world around us through artifacts, research, and more from the museum.*

▼ *I would like my students to use hands-on learning to think deeper about the topics covered in our science and social studies curriculum. I would also like students to apply what we have learned in the classroom with information, artifacts, and specimens on display at the museum.*

▼ *I am excited for my students to get an opportunity to not only explore so many facets of science and history, but also practice the skill of asking questions amongst these things and get hands on with these topics.*

▼ *I would like them to have a fuller understanding of the history of Grand Rapids and the peoples who have always inhabited this place as well as its immigration history.*

The student-driven project requirement is a crucial component of Immerse. Scholarship in the field of education has demonstrated that museum field trips are much more academically beneficial and meaningful when they connect to classroom work.^{1,2} Classroom projects that integrate Museum concepts or resources allow students to perceive their time on field trips as an essential part of their learning experience rather than an auxiliary bonus.

Our talented Immerse teachers are tasked with incorporating Museum-themed project-based learning into their curriculum. They are trained in project-based learning approaches and are prompted to develop a project that combines curricular objectives with some aspect of their time spent at the GRPM for Immerse.

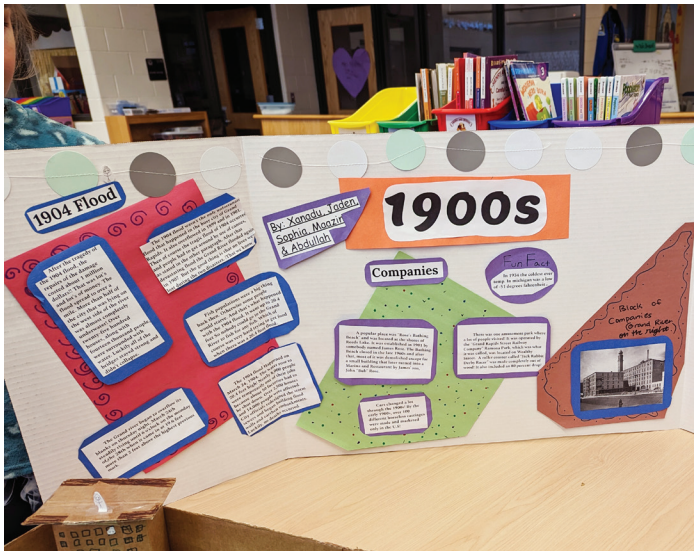
¹Kisiel, J. (2006). Making field trips work: Strategies for creating an effective learning experience. *The Science Teacher*, 73(1), 46-48.

²Moisan, H. (2009). Partners in process: How museum educators and classroom teachers can create outstanding results. *The Journal of Museum Education*, 34(1), 23-40.

▼ Immerse Project Showcase 2023

The showcase event is a celebration of the work that students, teachers and chaperones have done over the course of the school year. It is an opportunity for students to show their community what they learned. Each class is challenged to create a culminating project to demonstrate how Museum learning extended back into the classroom. There are so many creative ways Museum resources have been integrated across grade levels and subject areas.

1,029 community members attended this after-hours Education Showcase Event on May 16, 2023! Explore some of this year's project highlights below.



Grand River Exhibits, Kentwood Public Schools Discovery and Explorer Elementary (4th grade)

Students studied the Grand River in the 1800s, 1900s, and today. Then, they developed their own exhibits with trifolds, dioramas, laptop slideshows, and interactive games to showcase their learning. The interactive exhibits were inspired by exhibits they explored at the Museum and the content they learned during the Grand River watershed lessons.

This group exhibited their learning at the GRPM Showcase event, but also hosted their own showcase at their schools, inviting administrators, families and Museum staff to attend!

Science Projects, Roguewood Elementary, Rockford Public Schools (5th grade)

Teachers designed a project with lots of student choice. Learners were tasked to demonstrate their learning about one of the following exhibits that connected to fifth grade science standards: *The Power of Poison*, *Grand Fish*, *Grand River*, or *West Michigan Habitats*. Creativity was encouraged, and many project formats were created including Minecraft worlds, websites, physical models, dioramas and posters!



Photo credit: Dianne Carroll Burdick, School News Network, 2023



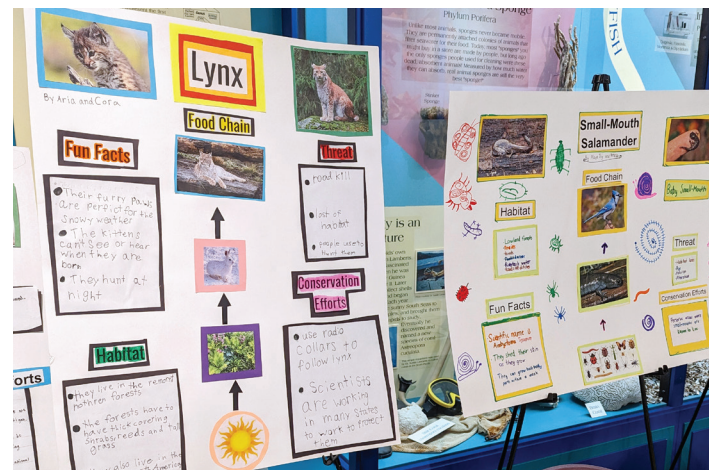
Fossils
By Jamie

Exhibit Poetry, Burton Elementary, Grand Rapids Public Schools (5th grade)

Throughout the school year, students learned how to use their voices through poetry. They combined this focus with their trip to the Museum and produced poems inspired by their favorite exhibits and artifacts they discovered. The poets published their work online and shared their pieces through QR codes.

Endangered Species of Michigan, Living Stones Academy (3rd grade)

These third graders loved learning about habitats of Michigan and the conservation of plants and animals. Students chose one endangered species of Michigan to research and made a poster including information about its habitat, what food chains it's a part of, the threats against it, and efforts to conserve the species.



Ofrendas, The Potter's House (5th grade)

This project was inspired by a visit to the traveling exhibit *Celebration of Souls: Day of the Dead in Southern Mexico*. Students aimed to educate visitors about Day of the Dead, while also remembering and celebrating their loved ones who have died. The class collaborated to build a large ofrenda with letters, photographs, objects, food and drinks.

▼ Program Evaluations

2022/23 Immerse participants completed surveys to provide qualitative and quantitative feedback on the program. The next few pages provide information on the data and stories collected through this evaluation process.

▼ Teacher Surveys

Immerse teachers were asked to provide feedback to improve the effectiveness of GRPM education materials in addressing learning objectives and engaging all learners. Paper surveys were administered on the final day of the weeklong Immerse experience. The information below is based on the 36 teacher survey responses we received.

Teachers rated their experience on a Likert scale and their responses were converted to a number value. The conversion is as follows; completely disagree - 1, somewhat disagree - 2, neutral - 3, somewhat agree - 4, completely agree - 5.

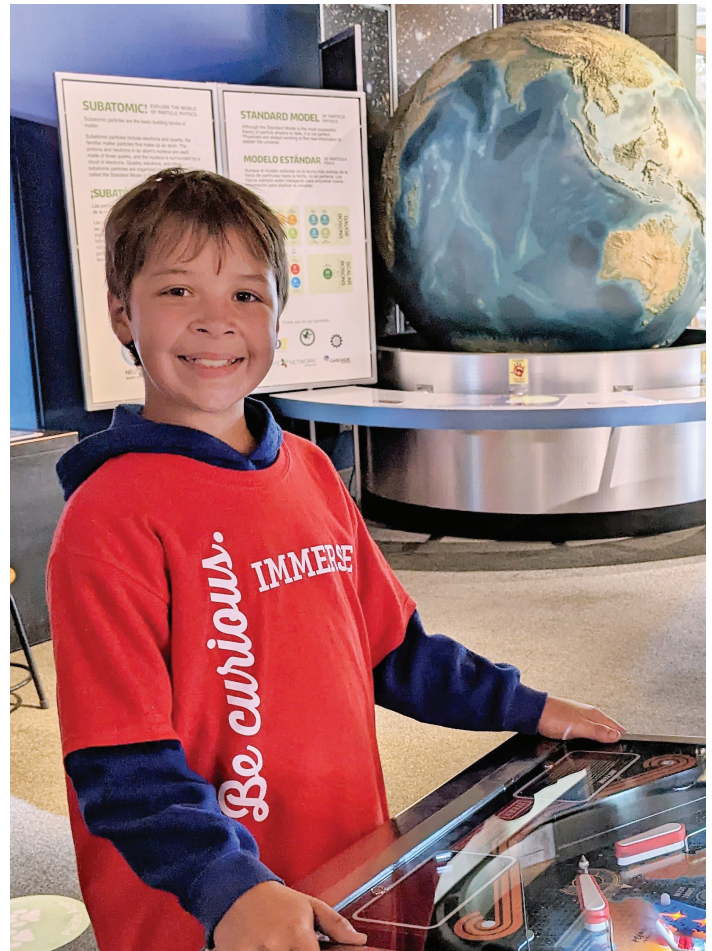


Question	Average Score
The Immerse PD / program orientation was informative and useful.	4.59
The individual planning session with GRPM staff was helpful.	4.95
The students were engaged and interested in museum learning.	4.85
The Immerse program was beneficial to my students, academically and supported classroom learning objectives..	4.92
Material was age / grade level appropriate.	4.79
The GRPM educators were prepared and professional.	4.87

▼ Teacher Testimonials:

These teacher comments speak to the value of hands-on immersive learning that GRPM artifacts and exhibits can provide. Common themes referenced across teacher comments demonstrate the following benefits of Immerse: fostering life-long learning in students, promoting a sense of connectedness to place and community, engaging students with unique materials that can't be replicated anywhere else.

"This experience strengthens students' appreciation of cultures, history, and community. I love my students to see history come alive, to take pride in their own heritage and have a deeper understanding of the community in which they live. The Museum is rich with their history and has so much to offer them in terms of a greater perspective of our city and state. It's also very exciting to use real artifacts to learn about culture and nature, and students truly enjoy being able to handle these objects. This week at the GRPM helps them understand that what we learn in school isn't confined to the walls of a school building and they can learn to use the Museum as a place to learn throughout their life." - **Jon Hovingh, Godfrey Elementary, Godfrey-Lee Public Schools (4th grade)**



"My students were completely engaged the whole time, looked forward to going every day, were the most excited they had been all year, and they didn't want to leave. The hands-on learning allows students to learn through exploration and discovery while introducing them to topics and materials they may have never interacted with before. My deepest desire is for my students to be life-long learners, and giving them an opportunity like the Immerse program shows my students that learning can take place anywhere. Learning through the Immerse program at the museum also gives my students a cross-curricular experience...Aspects of the museum align perfectly with our science and social studies curriculum and help these subjects come alive to my students, such as learning about space through the planetarium and Native American lifestyles in the Anishinabek exhibit. I can truly say that Immerse was one of the most fun and enriching teaching experiences I have ever been a part of." - **Anna Strobel, Crestwood Elementary School, Rockford Public Schools (5th grade)**

"The Immerse program is a wonderful opportunity for students to take what we are learning in the classroom and be able to experience those things first hand. They are able to see and touch real artifacts, they are able to explore space in a unique way, and they are able to utilize other modes of learning to experience the content. They are able to solidify a lot of topics in their minds that we have already discussed in class, along with learning and experiencing new things. For my students, Immerse was a bright spot in their year, and they have even developed new aspirations because of it." - **Morgan Kaltz, Cesar E. Chavez Elementary, Grand Rapids Public Schools (5th grade)**

▼ Student Experience Surveys

Participating students were asked to reflect on their experience at Immerse with a short survey. Surveys were administered on the final day of the weeklong Immerse experience. The information below is based on the 862 student survey responses we received.

Question	Responses
Have you been to the Grand Rapids Public Museum before this week?	171 students (20%) were able to visit the GRPM for the first time through Immerse!
Describe your favorite program or activity at the Museum.	<p>All responses in the open-ended feedback questions were reviewed through an informal thematic analysis. Responses fell into three major categories, listed below with representative answers:</p> <p>Planetarium Shows</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▼ <i>The planetarium because it had interesting facts and it felt like you were in space.</i>▼ <i>The planetarium because I really liked the constellations and learning about the planets.</i> <p>Guided Education Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▼ <i>LittleBits because I like to build with circuits and electronics. I loved being able to invent something and discover the magic of engineering. It also helped me to be more creative and realize that there's not always one certain way you have to do things.</i>▼ <i>The Augmented Reality/Old Streets of Grand Rapids program because I thought it was cool to be put into people from the past's shoes! It was fun to pretend to be someone in the 1890s and see what it would be like, and the prices and items in the stores at that time.</i> <p>Exploring Exhibits, both Permanent and Traveling Exhibits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▼ <i>The newcomers exhibit because it was fun and educational at the same time.</i>▼ <i>I really liked Fashion + Nature, it was so cool. It gave me many ideas. The little mannequins were so cool and how you could make your own outfit.</i>
Describe the most interesting thing you learned at the Museum this week.	<p>All responses in the open-ended feedback questions were reviewed through an informal thematic analysis. The top three subject areas are listed below with representative answers:</p> <p>Planetarium Topics such as planets, constellations, moons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▼ <i>That the moon rotates too as it orbits earth. But we always see the same face of the moon because it does one rotation and orbit at the same rate.</i>▼ <i>That venus is the hottest planet in our solar system.</i>▼ <i>Juno the spaceship took from 2011-2016 to get to Jupiter!</i> <p>Science content such as adaptations, engineering, ecosystems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▼ <i>That animals use mimicry to survive. And that the teeth of an animal can tell if they were a prey or a predator.</i>▼ <i>How to measure water quality and how waterflow works. We got to shape sand in an augmented reality sandbox and see how erosion would happen.</i>

▼ Student Experience Surveys Continued

Question	Responses
Describe the most interesting thing you learned at the Museum this week.	<p>Native Americans/Anishinaabek</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ <i>My favorite thing was learning about Anishinaabek. Their history is really cool. It was really quite interesting to learn about how they hunted and what they made.</i> ▼ <i>That the museum and downtown area used to be a native american village!</i> ▼ <i>The three fires tribes of the Anishinaabek are called Odawa, The Ojibwe and the Potawatomi.</i>

Students were prompted to share how they would describe the Immerse program to a friend or family member. Here are a few of their answers:

- ▼ *It felt like walking through a time machine.*
– Austin, 4th grade student in Kentwood Public Schools
- ▼ *I would describe it like imagine learning these things in one week at the Museum that you'd learn in one month in school!*
– Johnny, 5th grade student in Grand Rapids Public Schools
- ▼ *A fun opportunity to learn about your wonderings and participate in fun programs and activities.*
– Charlotte, 2nd grade student at Grand Rapids Child Discovery Center
- ▼ *Fun, exciting, awesome, learning, and the best experience I've had for field trips.*
– Audrey, 4th grade student in Kentwood Public Schools
- ▼ *It helps me learn about history, the ways of life, and things I never knew about. We get to learn more about stuff that we wanted to know more about and it is enjoyable for us by being hands on.*
– Hannah, 4th grade student in Kentwood Public Schools



How to Donate

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Accreditation

The GRPM was the first public museum to be accredited
by the American Alliance of Museums. www.aam-us.org

Contact Info & Hours

Monday – Friday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
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