

Immerse.

Be curious. | GRAND
RAPIDS
PUBLIC
MUSEUM

Program Summary and Evaluation.

2023/2024



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 12 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 2023/2024 Immerse cohort included:

- 56 classes, grades 2nd through 10th
- 1,419 students from 30 different schools

Catholic Schools	Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary School, St. Patrick Parnell, St. Thomas the Apostle
Charter School	Grand Rapids Child Discovery Center
Christian School	Living Stones Academy, The Potter's House, West Side Christian School
Forest Hills Public Schools	Pine Ridge Elementary
Godfrey-Lee Public Schools	Godfrey Elementary
Grand Rapids Public Schools	Burton Elementary, Campus Elementary, César E. Chávez Elementary, Congress Elementary, Grand Rapids Montessori, North Park Montessori, Ridgemoor Park Montessori, Shawmut Hills, Sherwood Park Global Studies Academy, Southwest Elementary School - Academia Bilingüe, Stocking Elementary, Union High School
Grandville Public Schools	South Elementary
Kentwood Public Schools	Discovery Elementary, Explorer Elementary
Northview Public Schools	Highlands Middle School
Private Non-Public School	Lake Michigan Academy, Thrive Learning Center
Rockford Public Schools	Crestwood Elementary School, Roguewood Elementary
Self-directed learning community	Blue Bridge School

▼ Immerse Programming

While classes are at the Museum, learners have self-guided access to all of the educational GRPM exhibits, both [core and regularly updated temporary exhibits](#). Supplementary materials such as scavenger hunts, student worksheets, and teaching guides offer inspiration on how to leverage the exhibit spaces for instruction. In the 2023-24 school year, the GRPM presented three phenomenal temporary exhibits: [Bugs](#), [Fashion + Nature](#), and [Mandela: The Official Exhibition](#).

[Planetarium presentations](#) in the Roger B. Chaffee Planetarium are also available for Immerse classes. Teachers can schedule up to 5 planetarium presentations within their week. 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.

[Guided Education Programs](#) are curriculum-aligned lessons taught by Museum staff educators. Immerse teachers select up to 5 programs throughout their week that connect to their learning objectives. 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.



▼ Menu of 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 help students unveil the stories held in the Museum's artifact and specimen collections.

- ▼ *Anishinaabe Cultural Artifacts, Civil War Artifacts, Historical Grand River Artifacts, Plant & Animal Adaptations*

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

- ▼ *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 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*

▼ 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.

The Education Department offers two options for orientation, designed to meet the varying needs of teachers based on their level of experience with the program. All teachers are invited to a comprehensive in-person orientation, but teachers with 3 or more years of experience with Immerse have the option to complete a condensed virtual, asynchronous orientation. Both options include a reflection for teachers - allowing them to consider how they will apply their learning to their Immerse experience, as well as tracking participation for full accountability.

Immerse teachers also have access to a [shared resource folder](#) which includes 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 kick-off orientation in June 2023, 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:

▼ *We would like our kids to come back with the feeling like it was a unique, hands on experience. We hope that exploring the museum, being able to touch artifacts, and read about the interesting facts will inspire curiosity that goes beyond that week.*

▼ *That they would see the interconnected nature of everything and the way that the things they're learning in school relate to the world around them. I also want them to be filled with a sense of wonder!*

▼ *I want them to find something that sparks their curiosity and love of learning. I hope that something opens their world up and can impact them lifelong.*

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Participating in Immerse has allowed me to take the concepts of museum learning, place based learning, learning through objects, and inquiry and apply those in the classroom year round. I love learning how other teachers are using the museum to teach, and I appreciate that the museum not only shares resources they've made, but also resources made by teachers who participate in Immerse.

– Joline Andrews

5th grade teacher,

Southwest Elementary School - Academia Bilingüe,
Grand Rapids Public Schools

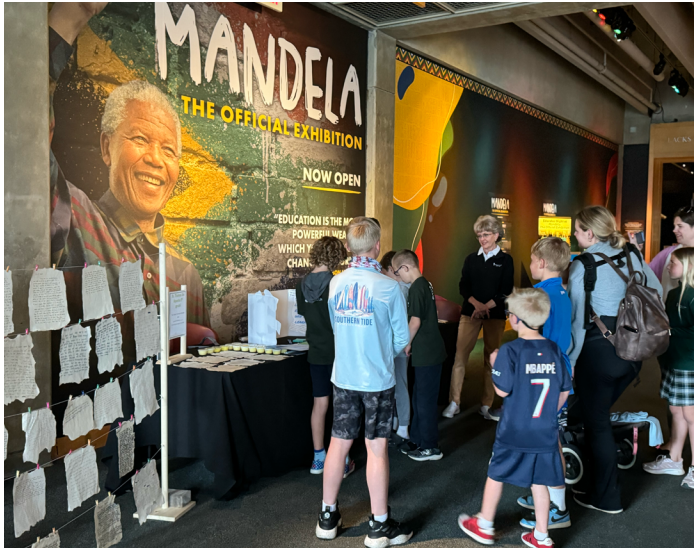
▼ *I want my kids to be able to experience their learning in a unique, hands-on way that will help them to engage and solidify what they know. I want them to be excited about the science and history around them, and inspire their passion to learn more.*

▼ *I'd like them to have a sense of history as a story that we're telling and that it's important to include everyone's voice in the story. I'd like them to see the museum as one of the story tellers of history.*

▼ Immerse Project Showcase 2024

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.

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 to show the community what they learned. 1,299 community members attended the free, after-hours Education Showcase Event on May 14, 2024! There were many creative projects, and a diverse range of formats. Explore some of this year's project highlights below as teachers describe the story of their Immerse project in their own words:



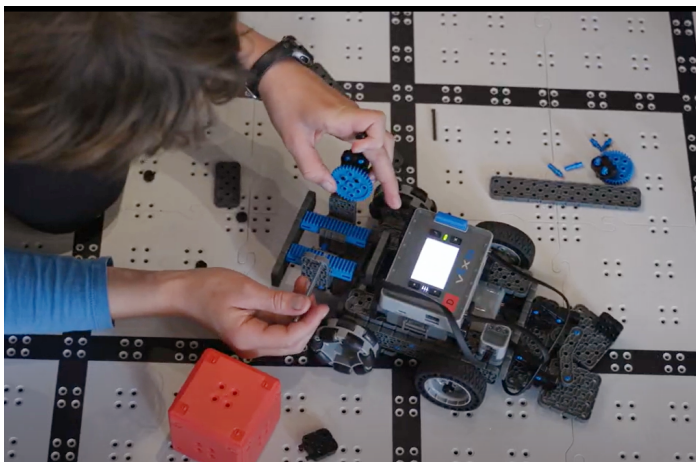
Mandela Inspires Pen Pals!, St. Thomas the Apostle School (4th-5th grade)

Students were immersed in the Nelson Mandela exhibit and throughout the week they learned about his fight to end apartheid and the sacrifices he, as well as countless others, made to end this terrible time in South Africa's history. While at the museum, students learned about key figures in Mandela's life, including Winnie, Christo Brand, President F. W. de Klerk, or Zeldla la Grange. Back at school they did more research on that person and then 'became' that character as they wrote letters to Mandela from the perspective of these historical figures. We were inspired to reach out to a Catholic school in South Africa with the same name as ours, and students spent time this year writing back and forth with real-life Pen Pals from South Africa!

Habitat Projects, Thrive Learning Center (2nd-8th grade)

We completed an Earth Day project, inspired by various experiences we had at the Immerse program, like exploring the West Michigan Habitats exhibit and studying heat and energy transfer through the planetarium presentations. Together in small groups, students learned to define different organisms in a habitat: producers, decomposers and consumers: omnivore, herbivore, and carnivore. They then received organism cards from a particular habitat and had to map the energy transfer from the sun to the producers, on to the consumers and finally to the decomposers. Lastly, we spent time talking about the habitat surrounding our school, the rain garden we are prepping, and the pollution that is impacting our habitat. Together we worked to clean the trash and litter that we could find in order to improve our local habitat.





STEAM!, Sticking Elementary, Grand Rapids Public Schools (5th grade)

At the Museum, my students loved the program STEAM: Design with littleBits. It exposed them to design thinking as well as how to build circuits and robotic inventions in small groups. This inspired us to continue with a robotics project. Using Project Lead the Way (PLTW), students built robotic cars to test energy with collision and conversion. We also created posters and 3D models based on our learnings about the Solar System and constellations in the planetarium.

Animal Adaptations, West Side Christian School (3rd grade)

3rd graders studied animal adaptations for our projects. We enjoyed our workshop with the specimens at the Museum and were inspired to learn more about how animals have adaptations to help them survive and thrive in their environments. Students were assigned a fictional planet, in which they designed an animal with adaptations specific to the habitat on that planet! They needed adaptations to find and food and water, to defend against predators or catch prey, along with any other adaptations they thought were necessary for their survival on their planet. We created 3-D versions of the animals with recycled materials!



Green Stormwater Solutions, Northview Field School, Northview Public Schools (6th grade)

Our guided programs at the Museum were all related to the Grand River in interdisciplinary ways. We participated in the Grand River Water Quality Lab, investigated historical artifacts, learned about the threatened species of Lake Sturgeon and cultural connections in indigenous communities, and participated in stakeholder simulations to consider how decisions are made about the future of the Grand River. After the Museum visit, we had the Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds visit to help us identify potential stormwater issues on our school campus. Students researched the health of our watershed, green stormwater infrastructure solutions, and then in teams worked to determine a solution for one problem area. They created proposals with a mix of posters, slideshows and 3D models to explain their solutions, and they presented them to key stakeholders. ofrenda with letters, photographs, objects, food and drinks.



▼ Program Evaluations

2023/24 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

Teachers were asked to provide feedback to improve the effectiveness of GRPM education materials in addressing learning objectives and engaging all learners. Surveys were administered on the final day of the weeklong Immerse experience. The information below is based on 47 teacher survey responses.

Teachers rated their experience on a Likert scale and their responses were converted to a number value

The conversion is: 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.	4.69
The individual planning session with GRPM staff was helpful.	4.89
The students were engaged and interested in museum learning.	4.92
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.	5.00
The classroom space was clean and comfortable.	4.94



▼ Teacher Testimonials:

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Immerse is such an excellent experience. Everything is always top-notch and well organized! This program has been instrumental in providing life changing, meaningful experiences for so many of my students. I work at a school where there is limited exposure and experiences for students due to financial difficulties that families face and this is one of those opportunities that provide students with many memories and fun learning experiences. Being a part of Immerse has also helped me be a better teacher. I have learned to deviate from some traditional teaching structures. We really now explore creativity and having fun working with each other, cooperating and listening to each other's ideas. We have a lot of conversation in the classroom, and I allow students more voice in everything we do. This is something I have grown in because these things were modeled and emphasized throughout Museum planning and in the programming they facilitate at Immerse.

– **Kristina Morton**

5th grade teacher, Burton Elementary,
Grand Rapids Public Schools

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I am always looking for ways to make what we learn in science and social studies come to life, and the Immerse program does this more than any other field trip we go on. Students bring up connections throughout the school year, tying what we are learning back to what they experienced at the museum. The difference between going on a one day field trip and trying to squeeze everything in and being able to actually immerse ourselves in the museum for five days is astounding. While I can show videos about outer space, they can't compare to being in the planetarium. Outer space is our last unit of the school year, but students still make reference back to the content of the shows we have seen as we are learning the outer space standards. We are especially thankful that there is now a planetarium show in Spanish, seeing as how we are a dual-immersion school. I love that the other programs that are offered connect to what we learn in science, social studies, and SEL. As much as I attempt to make learning come to life for my students, I would never be able to do it alone. The resources and educators from the museum are unmatched.

– **Joline Andrews**

5th grade teacher,
Southwest Elementary School - Academia Bilingüe,
Grand Rapids Public Schools

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This was a rad experience getting to plan and create a meaningful week for my kiddos! The flexibility and support of the staff was fantastic. They start with a big orientation and they have a plethora of resources to go through and work with. During the one-on-one meeting, they walked us through every piece of what we wanted to do and offered suggestions to help us build a schedule and come up with the best plan based on what our goals were. It was a really impressive and collaborative experience that helped us meet our needs. When they were teaching programs at the Museum, the educators were excited about the learning of my kids and it showed! Students' experience with engagement is much higher after coming here to Immerse. The rationale being that they're not reading a text and responding to questions. They're putting themselves into exhibits and really experiencing it. The Newcomers exhibit is a great example. Being from Kentwood, we are the most diverse district in the state and we have so many students who come from incredibly diverse backgrounds and have parents who are refugees or are refugees themselves. So going through that exhibit and being able to see themselves in it is an incredibly powerful tool in terms of giving them a sense of belonging and engaging them with the material.

– **David Schmidt**

4th grade teacher, Discovery Elementary, Kentwood

▼ Student Experience Surveys

Participating students were asked to reflect on their experience with a short survey. Surveys were administered on the final day of the weeklong Immerse experience. The information below is based on 939 student survey responses.

Question	Responses
Have you been to the Grand Rapids Public Museum before this week?	264 students (28%) were able to visit the GRPM for the first time through Immerse!
Describe your favorite program or activity at the Museum.	<p>All responses were reviewed through an informal thematic analysis. Responses fell into three major categories, listed below.</p> <p>Planetarium Shows</p> <p>▼ 39% of students identified the planetarium as their favorite part of the program. Representative student testimonials about the planetarium:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "I loved the planetarium because it felt like I was in space at times."• "We got to learn about the stars, planets, and one was even a roller coaster ride through space!"• "I loved the eclipse planetarium show because it gave me a lot of information of where I should go to see the eclipse!"• "My favorite thing was the planetarium because I liked learning about Roger B Chaffee, an astronaut from Grand Rapids." <p>Guided Education Programs</p> <p>▼ 29% of students said that one of the Museum staff-led guided education programs was their favorite.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The most popular program mentioned, by far, was STEAM: Design with littleBits. During this design program, students become real engineers and are challenged to create an invention using design thinking strategies. The other two most referenced programs were Connect: AR Adventure in the <i>Streets of Old Grand Rapids</i>, and STEAM: Grand River Water Quality Lab.



▼ Student Experience Surveys Continued

Question	Responses
Describe your favorite program or activity at the Museum. (continued)	<p>Exploring Exhibits</p> <p>▼ 23% of students said that visiting the exhibits was their favorite part of the week. The most popular exhibit was <i>Streets of Old Grand Rapids</i>, closely followed by the traveling exhibit <i>Bugs</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Streets of Old Grand Rapids is my favorite exhibit in the museum because I really like seeing Grand Rapids 100 years ago.</i> • <i>My favorite part was going to the Bugs exhibit because there was a lot of fun stuff like defeating a homet and zombifying a cockroach</i> • <i>The Bugs exhibit because I like the mazes and the slide and the little videos. My most favorite maze was the dragonfly one.</i>
Describe the most interesting thing you learned at the Museum this week.	<p>All responses were reviewed through an informal thematic analysis. The top three subject areas are listed below with representative answers:</p> <p>▼ Planetarium Facts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I liked learning how long it took the earth to orbit the sun and that the moon does rotate! The moon spins while orbiting the earth giving the illusion that it's not spinning.</i> • <i>On April 8, 2024 there will be a total eclipse covering the sun.</i> • <i>Earth's diameter is about 8,000 miles</i> • <i>Only 12 people have been on the moon</i> • <i>The Ojibwe people have a lot of interesting star lore.</i> <p>▼ Grand Rapids History & Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Learning how to work a printer from 1889!</i> • <i>That the first electrical light arrived in Grand Rapids around 1880!</i> • <i>That in the old days, people would be able to come to Michigan with 73 cents and still afford stuff.</i> • <i>How they made medicine in 1910-1920. I thought it was cool and it was something I did not know.</i> • <i>All the things from Newcomers exhibit because I enjoyed seeing peoples' lives from a different perspective.</i> • <i>Some of the things that the Anishinabe invented and used we still use today.</i> • <i>That Native Americans were here first and all about the fur trade between the Native Americans and Europeans</i> <p>▼ STEAM Programming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Testing water samples of the Grand River. The Grand River is cleaner than it would seem and a threatened species called lake sturgeons are coming back</i> • <i>Learning about the 5 senses and how they work. Like how your pupil becomes larger in the dark.</i> • <i>Learning about habitats. What animals need to survive and what they live like and how animals are all connected in an ecosystem.</i>

▼ Student Experience Surveys Continued

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:

- ▼ *A program that gets students more engaged in learning activities.*
- ▼ *It was fun and I got to learn new things. They treat you nicely and have cool things to teach you.*
- ▼ *One of my fave things because I got to touch things and see things that I've never seen.*
- ▼ *Highlight of the year!*
- ▼ *The Immerse program is really fun, we got to go to different exhibits and do really cool activities.*
- ▼ *I want to go to the museum every year because it was so fun! I learned a lot and I made good memories.*
- ▼ *A way to see the world differently.*
- ▼ *It's a fun program that you can learn and have fun at the same time.*
- ▼ *You see stuff that nobody else gets to see and you learn a lot. Also, it is a ton of fun.*
- ▼ *THE BEST WEEK EVER!!!!*
- ▼ *A fun and educational museum where you experience, touch, and feel the artifacts.*
- ▼ *I got to go to the Public Museum for a whole week and learn about stuff I couldn't learn in a classroom.*



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.

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

How to Donate

Online at grpm.org/donate or
by calling 616.929.1728

Accreditation

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

Contact Info & Hours

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