

Family & Free Choice Learning

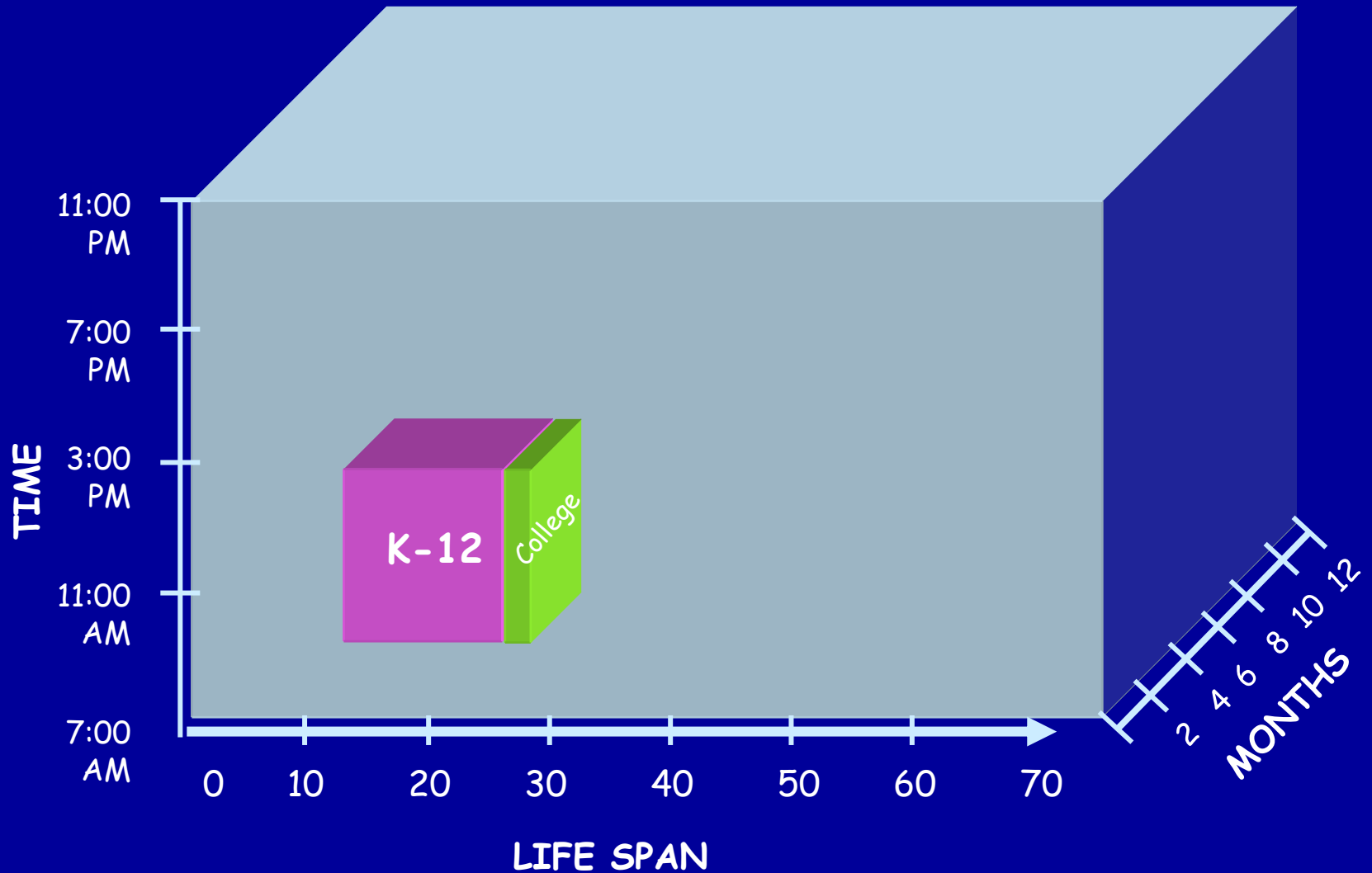


Special thanks to:
Lynn D. Dierking and
The Institute for Learning Innovation
for materials used in this presentation

Free-choice Learning: The big idea

- We live in a Learning Society
- Learning is 24 -7 – 52 – 80+
- Most of learning is guided by a person's (or group's) needs and interests.
- People engage in free-choice learning to find out more about what they find useful, compelling or just plain interesting.

Your Life: How much of this time do you spend with your family?



Family Learning is a kind of Free-Choice Learning

- We learn to learn within our family unit
- Family members bring a shared background and knowledge base to learning opportunities
- Members understand each other's learning styles and strengths

Why is family learning important to museums?

- Most of our visitors arrive at the door in a family group looking for a family activity
- Family & community (that's us) are critical to an individual's success
- Visiting museums as a child with one's family correlates highly with adult use of museums.



Family Learning:

- Occurs within contexts that families find appropriate and engaging
- Can and should be enjoyable
- Involves social interaction
- Is about finding value in personal observations and shared experiences
- Is making meaning by working, talking and solving problems together.

Family Learning outcomes



- Forging relevance between the topic and the family's daily lives.
- Enhances feelings of competence for the family and its members.
- Increases interest in topics and learning in general.
- Builds conceptual understanding of our content

Family Learning Impact For Children

- Supports a positive attitude toward learning
- Develops skills to interact with adults and peers
- Exposes kids to new interests
- Supports areas of knowledge and skills outside of school



Impact for Adults

- Supportive environment for adults to facilitate learning within the family for all members
- Enhanced sense of sharing time together
- Opportunity to create and share an interest with other family members
- Create an understanding of how to support fellow family member's learning and interests.



How can we support Family Learning?



Social-Cultural context

- Families may:
 - work together
 - rely on a facilitator
 - Explore in small groups and come back together to discuss

You have to respect each family's style of learning

- Encourage conversation and collaboration!

Physical Context

- Let your families know where bathrooms (with changing tables) are, accommodate strollers and wheelchairs
- Provide seating!!! – for both youngest and oldest
Create spaces that encourage conversations and collaborations



Watch and Learn

- Observed how your family visitors are using your offerings.
 - What can you do to support collaboration?
 - How can you extend their learning opportunities?
 - Are they showing you what they need to be successful?

We have a tremendous opportunity to participate more fully in the lives of families

- Collaborate with family-oriented partners
 - Support family hobbies and events
 - Offer structured learning opportunities (classes, family outings, etc.)
 - Facilitate family learning before, during & after visits

What Can Museums Do To Support Families' Free-Choice Learning ?

- Capitalize on primary assets
- Collections, knowledge and expertise
- Ability to immerse families in rich experiences
- Opportunities for collaborative learning
- Think Broadly about Education
- Respect the knowledge/experience families bring with them
- **Encouraging collaboration and conversation**