

Education Coordinator Update- January 2020-February 2020

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The new year has been of to a fresh start and feels good for this office. I have already received 5 requests for field trips, as early as the 15th of last month! Most are looking ahead to the end of the school year, but I have two who are already interested in February. Several calls have come from schools outside of the Alpena area, and some haven't visited in a few years. This is good news- that they are keeping us in mind from past experiences! In the office, we were doing some reflection on this change, and it may have something to do with the lack of snow days this year (Last day of school year has been planned already).

I also have been doing some planning with both Johnathan and Tina from the library on a few space/STEAM events possible. The main point of concentration has been an Earth Day event proposed by Tina in January. We have met two times to discuss the details, and now we just have a few more things to cross off the list (See details below). Between Tina and I, we will be working out some promotional items. We also will need to appear on the March Talk-of-the-Town if we hope to get our message out before early April. Tina is also taking the lead at securing a "Passport" program to go along with this activity day. She has sent out a letter to area businesses asking for a form of participation on April 4th (some will include activities, others are more of a checkpoint), where participants can stamp their passport in order to win planetarium tickets and library goodies. Studio Rubeo will be one of these offsite locations with an "Earth Art" focus. Greg Corace from the conservation district will be joining too.

The Alpena County Library and Besser Museum Celebrate Earth Day with Family Fun!

Date: April 4th

Time: 1pm-4pm

Location: Besser Museum

Cost: Free (+)

The Besser Museum for Northeast MI together with the Alpena County George N. Fletcher Public Library is inviting families to the Besser Museum for a FREE family activity day. This event will take place on Saturday, April 4th from 1 pm to 4 pm. This event also celebrates the 50th anniversary of the first Earth Day celebration in the US, which took place on April 22, 1970.

Activity stations will be located inside and outside of the museum building, and include a special guided nature walk, digging for fossils, investigating clouds, planting seeds, and many more STEAM activities. For students, STEAM represents: Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics.

The Planetarium is hosting multiple showings of "Habitat Earth" with special live presentation by Planetarium Coordinator, Johnathan Winckowski.

Visitors will receive entry into a door prize drawing for a solar system magnet kit. Survey takers may also win a special book from the Library.

This event also includes the opportunity to complete an "Earth Day Passport" as a family. Pick up your official passport beginning Friday April 3rd- April 4th at the Besser Museum. After you visit approved community partners and participate in their Earth-friendly offerings, your passport may be submitted to the Library for a chance to win a family book bag and planetarium tickets. (List participating community partners, including 4H, Studio Rubeo)

For questions about this event, please call the Museum at (989)356-2202, the Library at (989)356-6188 ext. 16, visit the Facebook event, or bessermuseum.org.

Johnathan took the lead on writing our application to the NISE Network for an Earth and Space Science STEM Resource kit(s) grant, which we were approved for a few months ago. We received Part A of this grant kit last week, and we are both extremely encouraged about these resources. The Besser Museum received these resources in 2018, and we have continued to utilize these kits over the last two years. Although we had a rough idea of what to expect through digital items made available while we waited, we were very excited to see all the materials as they arrived this week. The kits are of exceptional quality and include even more items that we will continue to use for a very long time. The paper materials are all easily reprinted, and the physical tools will be reusable for many years to come. Although these kits are mostly referred to as “STEM”, they contain many items fully adaptable to our “STEAM” focus as it relates to our mission in Art, History, and Science.

Due to the arrival of these kits, and our enthusiasm for their contents, John and I are also thinking towards the summer and creating STEAM day-camps and astronomy club events for families. This was an idea that we began discussing last year, but I think we are both feeling more confident in our roles now that we are approaching our second summer of employment. These day camps would include many tools and activities that we already have from prior planning, so we can have more dedicated time to marketing and securing volunteers or special guests. There are elements from the grant toolkits that would be better utilized for multi-day events (some crafts involve drying glue or paint), which adds value to the guest experience. I believe Johnathan is also feeling more confident in using the dome for many more types of learning since getting additional Spitz training for his role here.

I have also been thinking a lot about guest experience through educational pieces and signage. One thing floating in the background was additional signage for our village and avenue, but I have begun to dedicate some time into these items now that I’m not concentrating on field trips and events. I have been largely inspired by signage that resembles the example below (left):



Both examples (above, left) feature a historical photo background, coordinating colors, clear text and titles, and historical photos in sepia tone (may also be black and white). I have found other examples that feature historical quotes in a recreated “typewriter” format that I believe would suit many of the settings that we have around the museum. We also seek to feature many more historic photos, so there will be some areas that feature much less text than these examples express (example above, right). This is a great point of connection for kids’ resources, as I am also thinking a lot about our Besser Buddies idea, for example, leaving room to add kid-friendly phrasing or illustrations.