

Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites Teacher Study: Executive Summary

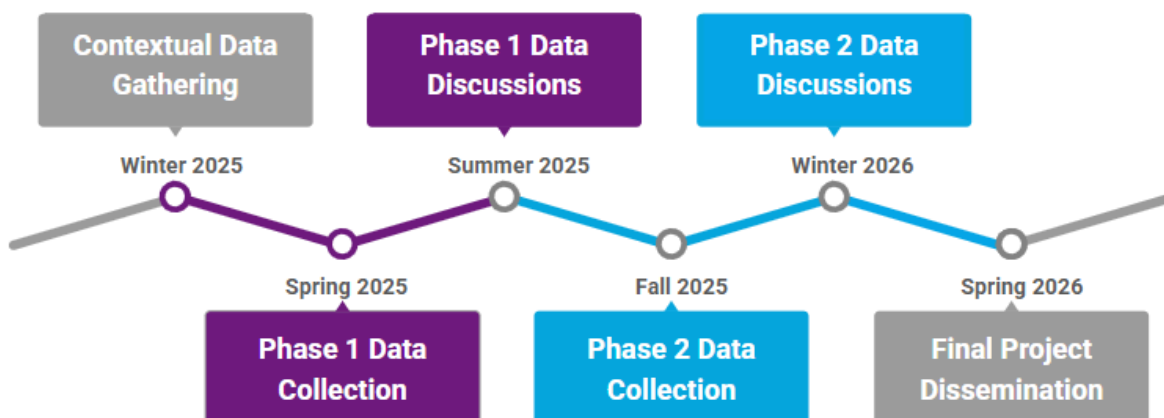
Project Overview

The Science Museum of Minnesota's (SMM) Evaluation and Research team led an 18-month study in partnership with the Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites (ISMHS) to understand how ISMHS can better support K-12 teachers in Indiana. This project was supported by funding from the Allen Whitehill Clowes Charitable Foundation and focused on two exploratory questions:

- 1) What are the needs of [Indiana] educators?
- 2) How can museums and historic sites meet the needs of educators?

This mixed-methods study included a literature review, three online surveys, a series of virtual discussion groups, and a pre-service teacher piloting program over the course of 18 months as seen in the timeline below. Contextual data gathering and phase 1 was a needs assessment focused on understanding the current landscape for Indiana teachers. Phase 2 was a follow-up to dig deeper into certain topic areas and test pilot products. Across all activities, the target sample was current K-12 teachers in Indiana, with the exception of the pre-service teacher group. The data includes:

- 1,235 current K-12 teacher survey responses (749 in phase 1 and 486 in phase 2)
- 68 current K-12 teacher discussion group participants (36 in phase 1 and 32 in phase 2)
- 79 pre-service teacher survey responses (phase 1 only)
- 42 pre-service teacher piloting discussion group participants (phase 2 only)



Key Findings

#1	Teachers are generally unaware of museum offerings including ISMHS but interested for the future to support their students
	Current and pre-service teachers are unaware of most ISMHS sites and offerings but were most familiar with Indiana State Museum. Current and pre-service teachers are most familiar with field trips; at both ISMHS and at museums generally. Lack of awareness is a consistent barrier for teachers using offerings from any external partner. Current teachers are most interested in offerings they can use directly with students. <i>"I'd like to know more about what is offered for my school. We are far from the Indianapolis/S. Indiana area where it seems like most of these museums/programs are based."</i>
#2	Trusted relationships are how teachers connect with external offerings
	The majority of current teachers do not receive any information about ISMHS' educational offerings. Teachers most frequently learn about resources from other teachers including on Teachers Pay Teachers, in conversations with other teachers, and through professional organizations. They learn about educational offerings from external partners from trusted sources including school staff, direct email communications from trusted organizations, and social media. These trusted relationships may vary across individuals but are what indicate that a program or resource is worth it. <i>"When you have another colleague – whether it be within your own building or other places that think differently, or see things differently, or experience something different – and they recommend it, that's when I'm the first to go, "How could I get that for my school?"</i>
#3	Teachers want logistics that match existing practices and habits
	Teachers appreciate when external partners use tried and true email and newsletter communications and have easy to navigate websites. Younger teachers use TikTok and Instagram to learn about offerings more often, while teachers 35 years and older tend to use the IDOE newsletter and Facebook. This extends to considering using programs and resources such as having programs be 45 minutes long to easily fit into school schedules, resources that are ready to go, and outreach and virtual formats that eliminate travel and busing logistical needs. <i>"I don't have a lot of time to be just randomly googling in my 25-minute prep a day, and so anything that is easy access, easy to find, if you're gonna do it, all the material's right there. I don't have to go to five, six different spots."</i>

#4 Teachers want resources and programs they can't do on their own

Teachers rated “exposure to new experiences” and “connection to classroom curriculum” as the most important goals they have for museum learning experiences. Teachers want offerings from experts that connect the classroom learning to the real world. These offerings can connect students to professionals, artifacts, and bring learning to life.

Additionally, teachers want support in providing hands-on experiences that take preparation and materials, specifically related science and social studies as they frequently lack time, curriculum, or resources for those subjects.

“Even big kids love anything they can touch, feel, and do. They love it when I dress up. They love it when we incorporate food. They love it when I can bring in an antique and pass it around and they could see what this actually was, but I just lack the time to curate all those things and put 'em together.”

#5 Teachers have consistent needs for external programming

Teachers described the experiences they are looking for from museums as hands-on, memorable, unique, and connecting to the real world. Consistently, teachers described effective programming and resources as engaging.

Teachers noted that engaging offerings are interactive where students learn by doing, and offerings that make learning real through visuals, materials, or stories. Lastly, teachers wanted offerings to be age appropriate for their students to support participation. For museums to be engaging by these different facets requires not just specific offerings but staff who are able to facilitate programs to meet these needs.

“If it's something tangible, then they can touch it and do it. They learn more and they retain that information more. So when they get to those questions on our lovely checkpoints or summative ILEARN, they feel like, oh hey, think back... think back to what we did. And it's just a click because it was a more tangible experience for them.”

#6 Teachers want support in content areas for different reasons

Teachers want museum offerings to align with standards to support required processes with administrators. Teachers cited support in ELA topics and math as most useful due to testing focus and requirements. Finding ways to integrate math and reading into other subject areas is always useful and valued.

External partners can also provide useful support in social studies and science as teachers have limited time, resources, and support. These content areas are frequently reduced to focus on testing subjects.

“My school doesn't have a science or social studies curriculum at all, so we're expected to take care of that stuff ourselves. So, then finding things for the students to actually have that hands-on stuff, whether I go on Teachers Pay Teachers or find stuff online, is something I have to do...”

Applications at ISMHS

This project focused on understanding how Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites can better support K-12 teachers in Indiana. The findings highlighted some existing barriers, like awareness, for ISMHS to overcome and confirmed teacher needs that they have been focused on for years. Instead of primarily pushing ISMHS to explore completely new formats or topics, the data showcased the need to center relationships, refine existing offerings, and streamline logistics and communications for today's busy Indiana teachers. This will support teachers to better know about existing offerings from ISMHS, find programs and resources effective and engaging when they use them, and keep returning for years to come.

Centering relationships with teachers:

- ISMHS will deepen existing relationships to broaden their visibility among teachers as a trusted educational resource.
- ISMHS will consider building earlier awareness of offerings with students studying to become the next generation of teachers in Indiana.

Refine existing offerings:

- ISMHS will narrow in on the topics, experiences, and resources that are unique to their specialized expertise and fit into teacher habits.
- ISMHS will consider integrating tested subject areas and assist with content that teachers have the least support around.
- ISMHS will adjust their activities to be more hands-on and prompt more real world connections.

Streamline logistics and communications:

- ISMHS will consider how to streamline their website and booking process so teachers can find what they need more easily and with less clicks.
- ISMHS will adjust program descriptions to highlight that they fulfill what teachers are looking for.
- ISMHS will consider adjusting their communication methods to meet the needs of different generations of teachers.