

Natural History Museum of Utah, Rio Tinto Center, University of Utah

School Programs Media Fact Sheet

(Statewide and On-Site)

Updated 10/22/11

Overview:

The Natural History Museum of Utah is the state's designated natural history museum and committed to fulfilling its mandate and mission of providing quality informal science education to students and teachers across the state---in rural and outlying communities, as well as along the densely populated Wasatch Front. The Museum has worked closely with the Utah State Office of Education for more than 40 years to ensure its variety of program content supports state science core curriculum for grades K-12. With a focus on 4th grade natural sciences, the Museum provides high quality specimens and content rich materials to complement and extend classroom teaching and learning. The School Programs department is partially funded by the Utah State Legislature through ISEE (Informal Science Education Enhancement) and receives approximately \$465,000 annually. The Museum matches this allocation with monies raised through individuals, foundations, and corporations. The Museum served over 55,000 students last year and rotates its outreach programs on a three-year basis in order to reach the 42 school districts at least once every three years. Museum educators have over 60 collective years of teaching experience and are on the road nine months of the year and on-site presenting engaging science programming year round.

Museum on the Move (MOM)

- Museum on the Move, now in its 15th year, is an inquiry-based outreach program designed to encourage students to make observations, discuss ideas, and record conclusions. This hands-on approach has been shown to help students better retain science information.
- Program content aligns with the Utah State Office of Education's 4th grade science core curriculum and intended learning outcomes.
- Using high quality Museum specimens and materials, students move through a variety of discovery stations to conduct core related investigations.
- Teachers can choose from four natural history topics: Utah Animals: Adaptations and Classification; Rocks and Minerals; Fossils: Evidence of Utah's Past; and the Great Salt Lake: Uniquely Utah.
- Museum educators presented MOM to approximately 20,000 4th-grade students statewide last year.

Teaching Toolboxes:

- Portable boxes filled with Museum specimens offer 16 different natural history topics for grades K-12 and provide a variety of tools needed to enhance science teaching skills, including lesson plans and multi-media resources.
- Toolbox content aligns with the Utah State Science Core curriculum and offers a variety of subjects, including *Bats*, *Insects*, *Ancient Ecosystems*, *DNA Extraction*, *Digging Dinosaurs Field Tools*, *Soils*, *Plants*, and *Native Utah*.
- Toolboxes are free of charge and available to teachers statewide through the public schools' regional service centers and school district offices, better serving Utah's rural populations.
- Approximately 1,000 teachers statewide checked out toolboxes last year to help educate more than 25,000 students.

Professional Teacher Development

- Museum educators hold regional professional development trainings to help teachers incorporate the Teaching Toolboxes into their science core instruction and elevate science teaching practices.

Professional Teacher Development:

- *Taking Learning Outdoors* is a year-long, project-based program that provides teachers with ideas on how to use outdoor environments and inquiry-based approaches to create authentic learning opportunities.
- *Physical Geology* is a week-long credit endorsement class designed to expand understanding of geologic topics. Teachers visited several field locations in the local canyons and Antelope Island.

Youth Teaching Youth (YTY):

- Multi-year and multi-age program that provides in-depth science instruction and mentoring opportunities for underserved middle and high school students from the Glendale Middle School community, located on the westside of the Salt Lake valley.
- Just completing its 17th year, YTY empowers youth to gain new perspectives and make thoughtful decisions about the natural world by participating in enrichment fieldtrips and events sponsored by the Museum.
- Fifty middle school students (6th – 9th grades) are trained by 16 high school YTY students to teach outreach kit topics to 4th graders in their community.
- The middle school students logged 1,305 training hours, provided 211 teaching hours, and reached more than 400 4th-grade students from elementary schools in Salt Lake City's most ethnically diverse and economically challenged communities.
- High school YTY students are mentored by Museum and U of U scientists to cultivate leadership skills and set goals for college. Students continue to mentor the middle school students, work in paid interships, and volunteer at the Museum.

Junior Science Academy (JSA):

- The Junior Science Academy started in 1969 by the Salt Lake Junior League and has continued to serve Wasatch Front teachers and students for 42 years.
- With a 4th-grade focus, two hour-long sessions engage students in inquiry and object-based activities that address specific state science core topics, including adaptation, classification, Utah plant and animal life, and rocks and minerals.
- With the use of Museum specimens and exhibits, JSA provides authentic learning experiences and encourages students to make observations to cultivate scientific process skills.
- JSA typically serves 66 different schools during the year, reaching over 5,000 students and providing a scientific resource to 200 teachers across the Wasatch Front.

Self-Guided Tours

- On-site tours attracts between 15,000 and 20,000 students a year and more than 600 teachers. Tours include hands-on activities in the various galleries facilitated by volunteers.
- Teachers are supported with core curriculum focused materials downloadable from the Museum's web site to assist them with their pre and post visit activities and discussions.

New Building Offers Innovative Learning Spaces:

- The *Swanner Forum* provides an inspiring learning space for teacher professional development opportunities to present research-based content aimed at improving classroom science education teaching skills.
- Three multi-use embedded classrooms in *Life*, *Land*, and *Past Worlds* galleries offer unique learning environments that can utilize content rich exhibitions set in immediate proximity.
- Outdoor exhibits spaces and adjacent Bonneville shore line trails allows students and teachers to interact with nature to directly apply concepts and skills learned inside the Museum.