

## Conference Abstract

# Beyond the Museum Walls: Developing Inexpensive Discovery Trunks for k-12

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## Abstract

Discovery Trunks - specimen-based educational kits - use museum collections and standardized curricula to catalyze critical thinking skills through inquiry learning. Inquiry learning facilitates the development of new knowledge by examining a novel situation in light of past experience - a crucial skill for a child in today's unpredictable world. Inquiry learning empowers students by making them stronger and more confident in their discovery and synthesis of information.

Discovery Trunks enhance learning opportunities for students, promote the parent institutions, and develop new audiences by taking the institutional mission beyond classroom walls. Such Trunks contain authentic, real world objects and inquiry lessons that align with state educational standards. Discovery Trunks encourage contemplative analytical skills, thoughtful communication, thorough exploration of a topic, and cultivate a citizenry of open-minded problem solvers. Through inquiry-based learning, we see key components of this personal investigation exemplified through student-centered, student-driven activities that connect new knowledge and prior knowledge.

This presentation will deconstruct these multidisciplinary kits and their contents to guide museum professionals to explore effective, high value, low cost materials and methods to produce and advertise educational kits to the community. Offered as an essential outreach component, these educational kits cultivate tomorrow's thinkers, movers, and laborers in an ever-changing society.

## Keywords

outreach, engagement learning, collections use, community, education, teaching, inquiry, real world, critical thinking, investigation, science education, k-12

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