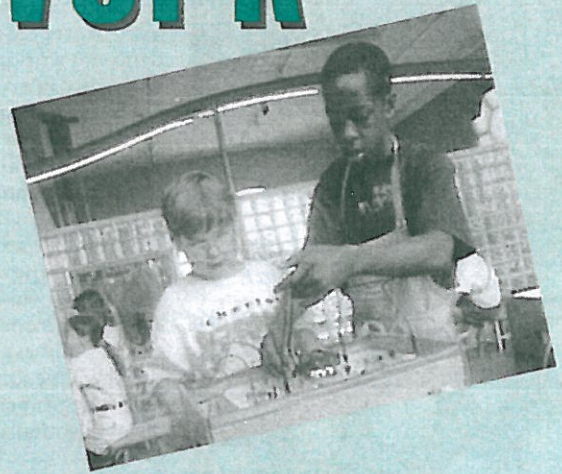


# Partnerships That Work

The **Museum**

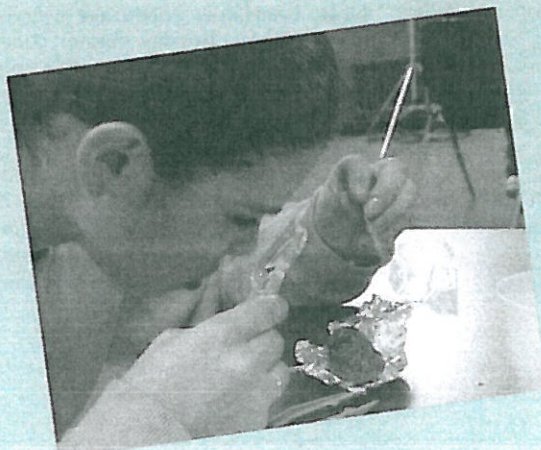


The **Zoo**



The **Community**

And **Kids**





This project was a partnership of

**Boston Community Centers**

Anne Schiraga  
Michael Griffin

*Charlestown Girls' Center*

Suzae Wrenn  
Mimi Dowd

*Gallivan Winners Circle*

Valerie Scales  
Dwayne Jenkins

*Shelburne Recreation Center*

Alfreda Harris  
Cheri Cope

**The Children's Museum**

Bernie Zubrowski  
Paul Evans  
Maria Cabrera  
Peggy Monahan  
Cass Bailey  
Dorothy Merrill

**Franklin Park Zoo**

Paula Silver  
Tina Cross

**Museum of Science**

Lynn Baum  
Stephen Moss, Jr.  
Manuel Roman-Lacayo  
Don Salvatore



©1995, The Children's Museum, Boston  
Permission is granted for reproduction of this printed material by museums, community groups, schools and libraries for educational purposes only. All other rights are reserved. Other than discussed above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission of The Children's Museum, 300 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210



This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. ESI 9253480. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

# Contents

---

## **Introduction 2**

---

## **How to Use the Videotape and Guidebook 3**

---

## **Do It Yourself 4**

---

First: Identify Goals: Why Do It? 4  
Reasons of Principle Include 4  
Reasons of Practicality Include 5

---

Second: Choose a Partner 7

---

Third: Build a Partnership 8  
Breaking the Ice 8  
Uncovering Differences 9  
Bridging the Gaps 10  
Laying the Groundwork 11

---

Fourth: Design a Program 12  
Program Content 12  
Responsibilities 14

---

## **Epilogue 16**

---

## **Resources 20**

# Introduction

*Partnerships That Work: The Museum, The Zoo, The Community, and Kids*, is a videotape and companion guidebook that tells the story of a very special collaboration between one zoo, two science museums, three community centers, and about 120 ten- to fourteen-year-old city kids.

This unusual partnership, called “ACES” (Adventures in Community Education Science), was an after-school science program in Boston, funded for two years by the National Science Foundation. It brought middle-school-age city kids from three neighborhood community centers—the Charlestown Girls’ Center, the Gallivan Community Center, and the Shelburne Community Center—into three of Boston’s most popular science institutions: the Franklin Park Zoo, the Museum of Science, and the Children’s Museum. Community center kids came to the three sites in groups of 15-20 for two hours every week during the school year. The groups rotated every eight weeks, so that by June, each participant had spent 10-16 hours at each science institution. The kids were then eligible to apply for a small number of paid summer internships at each of the three institutions.

ACES partnerships were innovative, exciting, and complex. They represented an ambitious advocacy for kids, science, and a new way of connecting museums to their cities. Among ACES’ objectives were:

- To get city kids excited about science and the possibilities of science in their own communities.
- To open the museum world to kids who, too often, are excluded from it.
- To stimulate the three participating science institutions, and others, to build durable relationships with neighborhood community centers that would outlast the ACES program itself.

The videotape and guidebook document the entire project in detail. The staffs from the three museums, the three community centers, and the video/guidebook production team produced them so that cultural institutions, educators, community organizations, and funders around the country could see firsthand how ACES was developed, understand what it accomplished, and, using our materials as a model, bring some of the benefits of the ACES program to kids in their own cities.



# How to Use the Videotape and Guidebook

## The Tape

The videotape was made over ACES' two-year life. Lively and fast-moving, it is a 49-minute-long history of an ambitious, multifaceted, multipurpose partnership.

The tape's first half brings you into the heart of ACES. You encounter the diversity and energy of the participants, learn the rationale and goals of the project, sit in on staff meetings, see how curriculum was designed at each institution, watch how sessions were conducted at each site, observe the internships, share the program's evaluation process, and hear kids talk about their own experiences in ACES, and how those experiences changed their thinking about themselves, about museums, and about science.

The second half of the tape concentrates on ACES' behind-the-scenes organization, leadership, and management issues: communication, administration, politics, team-building, and problem-solving. Staff members from the three science institutions and the three community centers give frank answers to such questions as: Why did you get involved with ACES? How did you build your partnership? Who was responsible for which logistical and practical pieces? What worked? What didn't work? How would you do it differently next time? What's your advice to others who want to start a program like ACES? Now that the program is over, how will you build on your ACES partnership to strengthen ties between museums and the community in the future?

We suggest you view the whole tape first, then turn back to this guide.

## The Guide

The guide is a 24-page handbook that supplements the material in the videotape and is designed to be used as a companion to it. It is intended primarily for use by educators and administrators at museums, zoos, and science centers, but we believe it addresses many concerns of community-based organizations as well.

While the videotape shows what was done in one city, with one set of people, institutions, issues, needs, and resources, the guide suggests practical ways to bring the principles and ideas behind ACES to other cities and towns. The guide outlines the steps we took to develop the ACES partnerships and curriculum, addresses some basic questions about what to expect in the process, and provides an extensive list of resources and references.

We hope the guide and videotape together are an inspiration and a valuable practical resource with which you can build museum/community partnerships and collaborative after-school science programs of your own.

# Do It Yourself

Now you've seen our Videotape, *Partnerships That Work: The Museum, The Zoo, The Community, and Kids*. You want to know more about setting up such a program yourself. How do you do it? How did *we* do it? Before you begin, it is important to think about why partnerships like ACES are needed in the first place.

Throughout the country, as in Boston, neighborhood community-based organizations (CBOs) and citywide museums and cultural centers have historically had little in common. They tend to be located in different neighborhoods, they seem to serve different populations, their respective missions rarely overlap. What little chemistry does exist between them may even be competitive and explosive. Yet, increasingly, as the inequities and injustices of urban living become more critical, these disparate groups are discovering that they *do* serve the same populations, or at least that they should. They must learn to forge strong, permanent alliances for the mutual benefit of all. The traditional social, economic, cultural, and geographic barriers that have kept them apart must be broken down so that the genuine needs of the community as a whole can be addressed.

If, in this context, you and your organization are thinking about creating a long-term collaboration, you must begin with a clear understanding of what you want to do, and why.

## First: Identify Goals: Why Do It?

One of the stated goals of ACES was to make the rich resources of the museum world accessible to city kids, who, as described by the National Science Foundation, are “underserved”—kids who are not traditionally found in museums and science centers, or in science careers. Implicit in ACES' ambition is the recognition that our cultural institutions do not always reach or welcome the multiethnic, multiracial, socially and economically diverse populations of our cities. ACES was designed to help open the doors of museums and science centers to city youth and their families, and to be a catalyst for small-scale but permanent change in the way that museums build and maintain alliances with the diverse communities of their city.

If you are looking at these materials, you are probably already thinking about implementing change within your own institution, in your mission, programming, fundraising, community relations, or outreach. You probably know that a program like ACES can be a catalyst for broad institutional change. You should also know that such a project requires a major effort.

Examine how developing such a program fits your institution's profile. What are you and your institution's leaders willing and able to do to open your doors to more of your community's citizens and to welcome city youth into your institution? Is there support from the top down? Is there funding? Are there well-trained, committed staff members? Is there space? Most important, *why* are you thinking about such a significant undertaking?

There are many good reasons, of both principle and practicality, that might influence your thinking.

### **Reasons of Principle Include**

- *To fulfill the mission of your institution.* If excellence, access, and equity are part of what your institution wants to deliver to the public, is it doing so? Perhaps a project like ACES can help you meet your goals, or to redefine those goals to better fit what you'd like to do.
- *To reaffirm your commitment to the idea that public institutions are truly resources for all,* a lesson not learned by many urban kids because many of those institutions have not been welcoming to them.
- *To introduce more kids, and more kinds of kids, to the museum world.* You broaden their ideas about other kinds of educational institutions, aside from school, that are "out there" and available to them. Short-term, you provide an opportunity for underserved kids to get acquainted with your institution, using the excitement of science as a hook. Long-term, you hope the kids will become ambassadors, bringing back their families and others from their communities, creating a broader and deeper audience for your resources and those of other cultural organizations in your city.
- *To provide role models for all kinds of kids in your city.* Staff members who mirror the demographics of your city's population help kids imagine their futures differently and help them explore their own potential, abilities, and gifts in ways they might not otherwise do.
- *To offer stimulating science experiences that expand kids' horizons beyond the classroom.* Museums and science centers can serve a legitimate educational function, exposing kids to science as a fascinating way of looking at the stuff of the world and how it works. Kids can learn that science is exciting, familiar, and accessible, very different from what many schools are able to offer during short class periods, tied to teaching a required curriculum, with severely limited resources.

### **Reasons of Practicality Include**

- *To help comply with local, state, or federal regulations* regarding outreach, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.



- *To increase your attendance.* Building up audiences is always important. Many museums have now reached “level-gate” in their admissions and need to expand their recruiting to get more people in, to keep funding levels up.
- *To obtain broad public financial and political support.* Cultural institutions get major funding from state and local governments, local foundations, and local businesses. Many cities have large ethnic populations, with mayors and city officials elected by those populations. It makes good political sense to have those “powers that be” see concrete evidence that you are paying attention to issues of local importance. The goodwill and publicity generated by a program like ACES can effectively challenge long-standing perceptions about how “exclusive” cultural institutions have been.
- *To address the changing demographics of your city.* Many institutions sit in the middle of culturally diverse neighborhoods, surrounded by communities they do not serve, including people of color and low-income and immigrant groups. A project like ACES, if it is a sincere commitment, not just an “add-on,” will show the community that you are striving to make your institution relevant and accessible to them. Improving community relations is a worthy goal in itself, but it will also serve to increase neighborhood turnout and support. In addition, it will lay the groundwork for the next 15-20 years, when, in many cities, people of color will be the majority population. Their needs must be met now and in the future, if your institution is to survive. Keep the “big picture” in mind.
- *To broaden the pipeline through which future scientists and engineers will come.* Part of the role of cultural institutions is to help develop future workers and leaders in the sciences, the arts, and the humanities. A strong selling point for local and national corporations and foundations is that you aggressively seek, *and maintain*, significant participation by people of color, particularly kids, in formal and informal science and technology education at your institution. Making the educational resources of your institution available to different kinds of people is a matter of vital importance for museums and the business world alike.

Once you have evaluated and come to understand your institution’s motives and goals for undertaking a project like ACES, you must also assess your commitment. To build a successful partnership and program, you need institution-wide collaboration, with involvement and support from the director’s office all the way to the floor staff. Such an undertaking must be fully integrated into your broad plans for the museum’s future. Scrutinize your motives carefully at the outset. Realize that it takes time to make genuine change throughout a large organization, which may be very used to doing things one way. Again, be sure you have a clear understanding of what you are attempting to do, and why.

For most organizations attempting to establish this sort of program, the first steps are far from sure. The process is unfamiliar, and the rewards are perhaps distant and difficult to define. With ACES, we discovered that the foundation of a successful collaboration between a community group and a cultural institution must be built upon two separate but closely related structures:

- A strong partnership in which both members benefit directly and measurably from one another.
- A specific, highly visible program that enables you to meet your common objectives.

## **Second: Choose a Partner**

The next step in developing a museum/community collaboration is to choose a partner. Decide what you want from a partnership, and from a partner. What will you get from them? What will they get from you?

If you are a cultural institution, you might want:

- visibility in a new neighborhood or community
- a new source of kids to try out your programs
- a new population of interested visitors who will grow into volunteer and staff positions
- rich, reliable feedback about your institution and its resources from people who use it
- support for your institution from a new segment of the population
- experience adapting your space and presentation of exhibits to the needs and wishes of an audience that has not traditionally visited your institution

If you are a community organization you might want:

- new programs for the kids you serve
- access to cultural institutions for families in your neighborhood
- a long-term connection to an institution for the future
- training for your staff in science or teaching

When you have figured out what kind of partner you're looking for, find out which community-based organizations (CBOs) in your city already serve the population of families and kids you want to reach. Which of them would build the best partnership with your institution? Here are some important criteria:

- *Pick a CBO with a long, dependable track record*, so that there will be consistency in the delivery of services. The agency should have well-

established roots in the community, with its own identity, programming, and staff.

- *Look for a group that makes fundraising a priority*, like Girls Incorporated, Boys' and Girls' Clubs, a scouting group, a church youth program, or a small neighborhood community house with strong leadership. The administrative and financial stability of the CBO is one of the keys to the success of your partnership.
- *Select an agency that already has a strong commitment to providing educational as well as recreational programs for its kids*. It's not necessary for the group to have worked with a cultural institution before, but it should offer more than after-school sports.
- *Make sure the community agency staff members are actively involved with the families and the kids they serve* and that they know the personalities of the kids in their programs. Anonymous "babysitters" won't contribute much to a long-term partnership.
- *Confirm that the CBO is willing and able to commit staff and space to your partnership and program*. In addition, if you are providing the activities and the location, the CBO should be able to contribute substantial organizational, in-kind, and logistical support, including recruitment and transportation.
- *Meet with the program director and staff, at the community center*. Get the lay of the land, the feel of the organization and the personalities of the people involved. Is the director personally committed to making the collaboration work? Is the agency sincerely interested in building a partnership with you, or just signing up for a service that you're providing, as if it were a series of field trips? Does the agency understand what you're looking for? What you're offering? What you expect from it? Assess whether your respective aims, which may be quite different from one another's, can be compatible and mutually enriching in the long run.

### **Third: Build A Partnership**

Once you've chosen your partner, the real work can begin. A good museum/community partnership is like a marriage, requiring give-and-take, the ability to listen, mutual respect in spite of your differences, a willingness to compromise, and genuine sharing of power and decision-making. It may be difficult at first, especially if collaboration is a new experience for either of you, or if neither organization really knows very much about the other.

#### **Breaking the Ice**

- Get to know your partner, and your partner's community, and give them a chance to know you. In traditional community/museum relationships,



“outreach” usually means plucking people from the community center and bringing them to the museum, a one-way street. For a partnership to succeed, the museum needs to go out to the neighborhood, bring part of itself along, and spend time with the kids and adults. Take time to meet administrators, program directors, staff, chaperones, parents, volunteers, and, especially, kids. Early on, have at least one all-staff meeting at the community center and one at the museum. Invite everyone who will be involved in the partnership. Provide food.

- Send museum staff members to make presentations at the community center, using some intriguing highlights from your collection. Special site visits will excite and engage youngsters, and give both kids and adults a chance to “check out” the new museum partnership on their own home territory. Community center kids and adults will feel more comfortable with new activities on their own “turf.” Your staff will have the chance to become acquainted with the community center’s situation and resources. They will also make a powerful statement with their presence.
- Hire and train permanent museum staff members who reflect the audience you are trying to reach, staff who will eventually become role models for the kids in the program. If people of color, women, or nonnative speakers of English hold visible positions of responsibility in your institution, it is powerful evidence of your commitment to the new partnership, particularly in an ethnically, racially, or economically diverse neighborhood.
- Attract lots of attention to yourself in the neighborhood. Let people know that you want to become a bigger part of their community. Attend community events, fundraisers, festivals. Post flyers in libraries, schools, shops, laundromats, and churches. Promote your new partnership, and make your institution’s presence a familiar part of the neighborhood.

### **Uncovering Differences**

For community-based organizations and cultural institutions, learning to work well together can be complicated because of some significant differences between them. Any or all of these may apply to you:

- *Inequity in funding and other resources*, and therefore, in salaries, staff sizes and attrition rates, training and advancement opportunities, availability of materials, space, and other physical resources, and ability to plan long-term.
- *Racial, cultural, economic, and ethnic diversity*. Museums staffs tend to be made up of white middle-class professionals. Staffs at community organizations tend to reflect the community itself, which may include people of color, nonnative speakers of English, recent immigrants, or the economically or educationally disadvantaged. They bring fundamentally different perspectives about the world into the partnership.

- *Widely differing skills, training, education, and experience* of staff members at the two types of organizations. They also may have different levels of experience, comfort, and tolerance when dealing with children and adults of diverse ethnic, economic, or cultural backgrounds.
- *Disparity between traditional roles.* Community agencies may see themselves as providers of recreational facilities and activities, and as safe havens for city children at risk. Museums may see themselves as caretakers of artifacts, history, and ideas who serve a primarily educational and entertainment role. Initially, members of the two groups may not see themselves as compatible.

Compounding the issue is the likelihood that members of the two organizations may be quite unaware that these differences exist at all. And, you may find, as we did, that there are no mechanisms in place to help address these fairly significant, and potentially difficult, cross-cultural differences.

### **Bridging the Gaps**

To resolve our dilemma, we developed a series of workshops run by professional facilitators for all the adults in the ACES partnership. The workshop sessions provided specialized training, information, and the opportunity to air concerns. Because they were held early in the collaboration, before the program itself got under way, the workshops were also a valuable opportunity for everyone to get to know one another, outside the pressures of running a program together. Some critical points:

- Acknowledge the existence of the above issues, as well as any others that may apply to your situation.
- Make clear to all participants what each organization does in its independent role, especially with kids, so everyone can feel validated and supported. Include a flow chart of the internal hierarchy of each organization so everyone knows all the key players.
- Make sure all staff members understand the funding realities. Familiarity with how community organizations are funded and operated, compared to how cultural institutions are funded and operated, will help prevent later assumptions or misunderstandings.
- Hold mandatory small workshops/staff training sessions. Focus on understanding and appreciating individual and cultural diversity, recognizing and adapting to different learning styles, and motivating kids in a variety of appropriate ways.

*For museum educators* who are not familiar with the needs of urban youth, workshops are critically important in exposing them to their own misconceptions and stereotypes; they also provide a chance to learn the

important role community agencies can play in the lives of city kids. *For community center staff*, the workshops provide training about the workings of the museum world and the opportunity to become familiar with the exhibits, materials, and programs at the museum. *For both groups*, the training sessions allow them to strengthen the goals of the partnership in spite of their differences and to highlight their collective advocacy for the kids.

In addition to helping confront and work through potentially divisive social issues, our staff training workshops also prepared the two groups of adults to work together in a way that neither was quite prepared for. The ACES program would require community center staff to come to museums not just as part of a once-a-year field trip, but eight times, and not just as chaperones, but as active participants and assistants in hands-on science learning. Likewise, ACES would require museum staff to see the same group of kids not once, as part of a one-shot visiting group, but repeatedly, over an eight-week period. They would be expected to get to know them, and to invest in a long-term relationship with them and their science learning. Museum staff would also be asked to train community center staff and include them in each activity in the program. These expectations originally went beyond what some participants were willing or able to do; the workshops helped them stretch to meet the challenge.

### **Laying the Groundwork**

Preliminary steps taken in the ACES program — breaking the ice, visiting between museums and CBOs, staffing initiatives, and training workshops — helped establish common purpose and shared expectations about the partnership, individual contributions, and accountability across the board. These steps helped move from the “getting to know you” stage, to the next step: laying important pragmatic groundwork for the *partnership* piece of the project. In other words, now that you know one another, how is this relationship really going to work? What do you want it to do?

Among the essential practical goals to address at this point are to:

- Develop a common understanding about the partnership: Who is giving what? Who is getting what?
- Develop personal relationships within the partnership and identify counterparts.
- Define roles for each staff member: Who does what, where, when, how?
- Set up clear lines of communication, and agree that using them is important. Develop phone lists and phone chains.
- Set up a regular “business meeting” schedule that everyone agrees on; then stick to it.
- Establish guidelines regarding kids’ behavior and discipline.
- Decide on methods to solve problems that may arise.
- Discuss long-term goals for the program and the partnership.
- Create the content of the program.



## Fourth: Design A Program

When your partnership is established, you can create the second piece of your collaboration, the program.

Because of the way ACES was funded, the zoo and museums designed their programs in advance, and the community partners, which were chosen later, adapted to the programs already in place. As a result, the community agencies and their staffs felt little ownership in the content or process of the museums' programs, and were sometimes unclear as to the role they were expected to play. Misunderstanding and frustration among all the staff was common. Clearly, it would have been better if the partners had designed the program together.

Unfortunately, funding realities often create a Catch-22 situation for projects like ACES. Grants are usually available for carrying out programs, not building partnerships that then create programs. One suggestion is to build your partnership as an unfunded community service. Then, later, apply for funds to support the programs you have developed together to meet the interests and needs of your partnership. However you manage it, ACES' lesson is to *create the program with your partner*, paying particular attention to involve not just the directors of your partner organization, but the program givers as well.

### Program Content

To create a program that will make the most of your institution's resources and provide the best possible experience to the kids in your partnership, look hard at what is most interesting and appealing in your collections, and ask yourself and your partner a lot of questions:

- Who is your audience? (age group, experience, demographics)
- What are your goals? What kinds of experiences do you want the kids to have?
- What are your resources? (exhibits, materials, staff)
- What is the time frame available to you?
- Based on the community centers' knowledge of the kids, what would *they* like best?
- What would be new for the kids, engaging, accessible, and doable with available resources?
- What themes in your institution's exhibits would be logical ones around which to organize an after-school program?

All three ACES science institutions developed programs that used the special strengths of their permanent collections as the core. While they took advantage of one or two special events, most of the program was centered on what they already had to offer.

- At The Children's Museum, the curriculum centered around the physical science exhibits. The staff also incorporated weekly hands-on

experimentation with familiar household objects, critical thinking skills, and record-keeping.

- At the Franklin Park Zoo, the focus was animal adaptation, research, and zoo career choices. Each week a different aspect of animal interdependence and biodiversity was the theme. Students also produced elaborate artwork based on their zoo experiences.
- At the Museum of Science, observation was the thread that joined together many diverse exhibits. Each week the students spent half their time in the exhibit halls and half working on an exhibit-related project that they could take home.

At the three institutions, the summer internships were designed as an integral part of the program. ACES became an entry-level introduction for a few kids to become long-term members of museum staffs. If you intend to include internships as part of your program, consider the following:

- *Successful internships require support from the entire museum staff.* Interns need to be familiar with all the exhibits and comfortable with the workings of the whole institution. Everyone — from the director to the head of education, to floor managers, volunteer trainers, custodial and security staff, and subcontractors in food service and museum shops — needs to be made aware, and supportive, of your internship program. Some special training may be useful, to acquaint everyone with the larger issues that underlie your partnership and the internship program itself.
- *Interns need regular supervision.* The ACES kids were very young (10-12), and this was their first real experience with the world of work. In two museums, we paired interns with senior “teen specialists,” who were already Museum Interpreters, in what turned out to be a very successful apprenticeship relationship.
- *A small stipend is a real bonus.* It was well appreciated and gave kids the sense that their contribution to the museum, though small, was genuine and worthwhile. Be sure to check local statutes regarding payment of children under 14.

Of course, every museum/CBO program will differ. There are, however, some important patterns of success and failure that became apparent to us through the feedback from the kids and staffs, and in the final written evaluation of the ACES program.

- Using actual museum exhibits to teach science was effective, especially when followed by a related activity.
- Using art and creative activities as part of science learning worked very well.

- Hands-on activities worked better than lectures or passive activities.
- Activities and objects that kids could continue to work on at home were very successful.
- The lower the student-to-adult ratio, the better.
- Allowing kids the opportunity to make choices and be leaders was important; small group activities provided many occasions for this.
- Providing transition time from school, and FOOD, was essential.
- The less ACES was like school, the better.
- Self-evaluation, and gathering/soliciting regular feedback from the kids, was essential. It was important to make changes as we went along.

## **Responsibilities**

No program, no matter how exciting and well designed, will work unless it is managed well. Good management depends on good communication and clear delegation of responsibilities. In ACES, the persistent problems with transportation, which show up somewhat humorously in the videotape, really indicate serious management difficulties: administration and communication, responsibilities and expectations.

When structuring your program, make sure you cover all the details. Nothing should be taken for granted or overlooked. These examples from ACES give an idea of the range of possible stumbling blocks. We had difficulties with all these issues, and many others, during the ACES program.

- *Assign responsibility for every little detail.* Who does what? Who provides the transportation? What about gas? Who provides the snack? Who's responsible for calling about scheduling changes? When do they call? What if you just get a message machine? Who comes to business meetings? Who handles discipline? Who are the chaperones? What is the job of the museum staff? What about the community center staff? Who arbitrates disagreements between adults?

- *Define what commitment to the program means.* All ACES staff members agreed in principle that the kids' commitment to the program was important. But "commitment" did not translate the same way to everyone, and wasn't clarified in the early cycles of the partnership. ACES programs had been designed by museum staffs to be sequential, so that each session depended a little on what the kids had investigated the week before. Some community center staff members did not understand that at first; they sent different kids each week, to give more kids the opportunity to come to the museums. Once the expectations and misunderstandings became clear, the same kids came each time. But confusion could have been avoided if particulars had been spelled out in the beginning.

- *Draw up a commonly held set of expectations about participation.* We found it was important to explain to kids and staff alike that ACES was not



school, that they'd be learning things all along, we hoped, but that it would be fun. We had to let them know what the experience would be like, and that "educational" didn't necessarily mean "like school." At one ACES site, during the first year, kids were given some messy materials and invited to explore what happened when they mixed them together. The community center staff members thought the kids were being disruptive for not doing exactly as the instructor had said, and disciplined them for "fooling around." What the museum staff saw as curiosity, the center staff saw as disobedience, a misunderstanding that could have been avoided if there had been more clearly defined expectations. In addition, it is important to be specific about dependable attendance. One built-in attendance incentive for ACES kids was that only those who attended ninety-five percent of the sessions were eligible to apply for the internships.

- *Make sure the kids understand what the program is all about.* During the first year of ACES, we made several false assumptions about what the kids knew about the program. Some kids thought ACES was punitive, extra school that they would be graded on. Others did not understand that they were being asked to make a commitment to come not just this Wednesday, but every Wednesday all year. One museum staffer was concerned that no one was showing interest in the upcoming internships. It turned out that the kids did not know what internships were. Once they understood the meaning, more than half the group applied. At the outset of your program, you need to meet with the kids directly to let them know what the program is all about. Schedule a site visit to the community center. Introduce the instructors. Explain the scope and content of the curriculum. Give the kids some examples of what they'll be doing, and put it in the context of their day, their week, their year. Tell them about the snacks. Explain how they'll get to the museum and back to the center.

- *Don't forget that museums filled with strangers can be very intimidating places.* Be aware that many city kids, and adults, may have had very little experience with institutions that are friendly places for them to use. They may need extra time to get acquainted with new, imposing, unfamiliar places and people. Build time into your program to personalize your institution, to help kids assimilate what may be for them an overwhelming situation.

- *Collaborate in establishing shared standards of behavior,* with clearly understood consequences for violations. After much friction and frustration over behavior problems during the first year, the ACES partners wrote a contract that spelled out a set of common expectations that covered behavior in transit, in the museums, and at the zoo. Penalties for infractions were specifically listed as well. The kids signed the contracts, as did their parents, the community centers, and the museums. Behavior was not an issue in the second year.

You and your partner should anticipate that some of these issues, and others, will arise. Expect, too, that you will have differences of opinion on how to resolve them. Many of them just have to be worked out as you go along. However, if you expect that they will come up, (and they will), and if you have already established good communication with your partner, you will be better prepared to solve problems in an effective and noncombative fashion.

### **Two additional suggestions**

- *Make sure all members of the partnership understand their importance to the whole.* Carefully selecting kids for the program, and making sure they get to the institution on time, week after week, may not be as glamorous as doing the hands-on activities, but without the kids, there is no program. The community agency's contribution is essential, and everyone needs to know it.
- *If possible, hire or designate a program coordinator,* whose primary or exclusive responsibility is the smooth running of the program, separate from its actual content. As a neutral ombudsman, this person can expedite, delegate, improvise, and patch up disasters more effectively than any partisan staff member. The part-time salary for such a person more than repays the project in trouble avoided and problems solved.

# Epilogue

We hope you have gained some useful information and insight about museum/community collaborations, building partnerships, creating programs, serving kids, addressing differences, and broadening your institution's appeal. If you decide to undertake a venture like ACES, we wish you great luck, and urge you to consult the final chapter of this guidebook, which contains additional resources to support you in your effort.

We would like to take one last look at the ACES partners. The ACES program is over; funding has ended. The three community organizations and the three science institutions have had a chance to assess the long-term changes that this collaboration has brought about.

Collectively, the community agencies—the Gallivan Community Center, the Shelburne Community Center, and the Charlestown Girls' Center—feel that the ACES experience was terrific for the kids, enlightening to the center staff members, and entirely worth the effort they made. Two of the three centers are continuing their partnerships on a very informal basis with the three science institutions. One center has made a formal partnership with an institution. One-year free museum/zoo passes have made continued attendance a real possibility for ACES graduates and their families, as well as other CBO members. All three CBOs are trying to create programs that use their own staff members as science teachers. They are beginning to collaborate with more science and cultural institutions on a regular basis, as part of what they, as community agencies, offer their clients.

Despite the absence of ACES funding, all three cultural institutions have incorporated ACES' ideas into their ongoing programs.

- At the Museum of Science, ACES was a major learning experience; it helped the museum identify strengths and avoid problems in later projects.

From watching the videotape, Museum of Science staff learned about the community centers' feeling of intimidation and powerlessness toward museums. Said one administrator, "It's easy to forget how we look to people outside, and it's important to remember what that feels like. I realized that, during the program, advocacy for the kids was shared by museums and community centers equally, but power was not. We need to define ways of changing that balance next time."

The museum now has two programs, one new and one ongoing, shaped by what the participants learned through ACES about working with city youth in science. The Museum has developed a partnership with a new Boston community agency. Staff members say that because of ACES, they knew from the beginning where difficulties would arise, how to identify the

key people in the organization, and how to genuinely share decision-making and responsibility. And, because of ACES, they are making sure that this time, power is shared by both partners.

At the Museum of Science, ACES also helped shape a positive building-wide attitude about the museum's mission. Far beyond the Education Department, staff throughout the museum have now had positive experiences with underserved middle-school-age kids and community agencies from three of Boston's many neighborhoods. More museum professionals than ever in the past have a broader, revitalized sense of who they want to serve and how to serve them. As a result of ACES' success, and because of a museum-wide diversity initiative, the Museum of Science has begun to include community-based programming not just as a grant-funded extra, but directly in their operating budget.

- Since ACES, staff members at the Franklin Park Zoo now realize the great potential of working with middle-school-age city kids. Curators, veterinary staff, groundskeepers, and animal specialists are astonished at how much kids learned and changed in just one year. For the first time, this noneducation zoo staff is willing to hire neighborhood kids under 18 as interns and volunteers.

Existing school-based programs continue, much changed by the impact of ACES' curriculum and hands-on successes. The Zoo has also designed a new Education Center based on the ACES curriculum, which was called "Life Links." Proposals have been written and funds are being made available to support this major initiative by the Zoo's education staff.

The Zoo is also developing a permanent partnership with a neighborhood middle school—to get kids excited about science and to help develop kids' self-esteem, using zoo exhibits and animals as they did in ACES. Before ACES, the surrounding neighborhood didn't think the Zoo wanted to be involved with them. The Zoo staff has now seen both the great need and the great responsiveness in the community to what they have to offer. There's an enlivened courtship process going on, with the Zoo letting people in the neighborhood know in many innovative ways that they WANT to be actively involved in community life.

- The Children's Museum has done ACES-type programming for more than twenty years; many of those programs are ongoing, building upon the long-term partnerships that the Museum has nurtured over time. Still, it has found new ways to grow and change in response to the success of ACES. Here's one example:

As the ACES program came to a close, The Children's Museum and the Charlestown Girls' Club staff looked for ways to continue to work together. The museum found an opportunity with funding from the state. As is often the case, meeting the proposal deadline required immediate decisions



for a very quick turnaround. In the past, the museum director might have simply called the center director to get a hasty go-ahead, written the proposal, and consulted with both museum and center program staff later. This time, however, the museum knew the importance of involving not just directors but program staff from both institutions in fine-tuning the project and framing the request. And so, both groups rearranged their schedules to meet immediately, to work out the details of the program they wanted. When funding came through, the new partnership began with workshops for all staff; museum personnel trained community center staff in the science content and process skills that are part of the program. The program itself meets half the time at the museum, the other half at the community center, using kits prepared by museum and community staff together. There is hope that this partnership will continue for many years.

In closing, we want to thank all the kids of ACES, who gave us so much to think about, whose energy, enthusiasm, excitement, creativity, patience, unpredictability, curiosity, tolerance, and great sense of humor helped us learn how to do our job.

Thanks, kids!

# Resources

## Videos

*Science First Hand, Models in Physical Science: Structures, Tops and Yo-yos, Water Wheels.* WGBH Educational Foundation, Boston, MA, available by calling 1(800) 255-9424.

## Books

ASTC (Association of Science-Technology Centers) has a publications list. For information: ASTC, Suite 500, 1025 Vermont Ave. NW Washington 20005. Two relevant works:

Crane, Valerie, Heather Nicholson, Milton Chen, Stephen Bitgood. *Informal Science Learning: What the Research Says About Television, Science Museums and Community Based Projects*, 1994

Coats, Victoria. *Seeking Synergy*. Oregon Museum of Science, 1995.

Druger, Marvin. *Science for the Fun of It: A Guide to Informal Science*. Washington, D.C.: National Science Teachers Association.

Edwards, Ditra, Jo K. Gray, Beth Perdue, Patricia Jahoda Stahl. *Growing Together*. Boston: The Children's Museum, 1993.

Girls Inc. Publications are available through Girls Inc., 30 East 33rd St., New York, N.Y. 10016 or Girls Inc., National Resource Center, 441 West Michigan St., Indianapolis, IN 46202.

*The Explorer's Pass*. A Report on Case Studies of Girls and Math, Science and Technology (part of Operation SMART Research Report).

*Not Too Much Like School*. Case Studies of Relationships between Girls Clubs and School in Providing Math and Science Education to Girls Age 9-14.

*The Power Project*. An Operation SMART Planning Guide (A Program to Encourage Every Girl in Science, Math, and Relevant Technology). New York: Girls Incorporated, 1990.

*Spinnerets and Know-How*. An Operation SMART planning Guide (A Program to Encourage Every Girl in Science, Math and Relevant Technology). New York: Girls Incorporated, 1990.

Willow, Diane and Emily Curran. *Science Sensations*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1989.

Zubrowski, Bernie - many science activity books for children.

*Messing Around With Water Pumps and Siphons; Messing Around With Baking Chemistry; Milk Carton Blocks; Ball Point Pens.* All published by Little, Brown and Company, Boston, MA.

*Mirrors; Making Waves; Balloons; Blinkers and Buzzers; Clocks; Raceways; Tops; Wheels at Work; Machines.* All published by William Morrow & Co., Inc., New York, NY 10009.

*The Models in Physical Science Series: Structures; Tops and Yo-yos; Ice Cream Making and Cake Baking; Inks, Food Colors and Papers.* All published by Cuisenaire Company of America, White Plains, NY 10602-5026.

To order videotapes and the  
viewer's guide call  
1-800-255-9424  
or write to:  
WGBH  
PO Box 2284  
South Burlington, VT 05407-2284  
\$19.95 plus shipping and handling

For evaluation information, write to:  
Campbell-Kibler Associates  
80 Lakeside Drive  
Groton, MA 01450  
or call  
508-488-5402  
or on e-mail  
73307.1330@compuserve.com

Viewer's Guide  
Writer  
Bebe Nixon

Design  
Dennis O'Reilly



Videotape produced by WGBH  
Instructional Programming Group  
©1995 WGBH Educational Foundation  
All rights reserved

Executive Producer  
Lynn Cadwallader

Producer  
Bebe Nixon

Associate Producers  
Andre Stark  
Amy Tonkonogy