Docent Teaching Practices: An Implementation Evaluation

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CONTENTS

Introduction	p. 2
Summary of Findings	p. 4
Discussion & Recommendations	p. 7
Evaluation Objectives	p. 11
Methodology	p. 12
Findings: Demographics of School Groups and Docents	p. 14
Findings: Tour Descriptions	p. 17
Finding: Docent Objectives Observed	p. 22
Findings: Docent Questionnaire	p. 26
Appendix A: Findings from Student Responses	p. 28
Appendix B: Terms and content considered not age-appropriate	(REMOVED)
Appendix C: K-12 Docent-Guided Tours Goal and Objectives	p. 31
Appendix D: Observation Tool with Criteria Defined	(REMOVED)

INTRODUCTION

Teaching Programs staff and other members of the Education Division at the Dallas Museum of Art (DMA) want to learn more about the student experience occurring in the galleries during one-hour docent-guided tours. The focus of the present evaluation is on the docents' role in facilitating the student experience. It is standard practice in evaluation to conduct an implementation evaluation before proceeding to an impact evaluation. Before considering conducting a study that fully focuses on the student experience during docent-guided tours, it is important to become very familiar with the practices of the docents guiding the tours. While assessing the performance of a group of unpaid volunteers can potentially be uncomfortable, it is important for docents and docent programs to be approached with a high level of professionalism. As Barbara Zollinger Sweney of the Columbus Museum of Art states:

> Most paid staff members are given an annual evaluation to consider their strengths and weaknesses and to plan for their future personal and professional development. While docents are unpaid, their conduct and contribution are expected to be professional. If it is possible, an annual staff-conducted evaluation of each docent is productive and educational for both paid staff and docents.[1]

The DMA Education Division has certain standards in place for leading tours, and docent training sessions and materials provided for docents support those standards. However, staff needs to know to what degree and in what specific ways those standards are practiced. As an education team (staff and docent volunteers), we must ask whether we doing what we say we are doing. This study will be used to better support docents in their teaching, as findings will directly inform future docent training sessions. One aspect of the study (in Appendix A) does touch on the student experience and possible connections between student learning and docent practice are considered. These particular findings will guide us in preparing for a future impact evaluation.

Museums often struggle with defining aspirational yet realistic goals for one-hour student tours. Evaluation planning began in January 2008 with writing a program goal: "On docent-guided tours, students will experience the Museum as a comfortable place to visit and return to, discover that works of art are relevant to their lives, and begin to see their world in a fresh way." This goal and the program objectives are based in the Museum's teaching philosophy that prioritizes close and careful looking, experiencing wonder, making personal connections to works of art, and accommodating diverse learning styles.[2] The docent program plays a central role in carrying out the Museum's mission: "To champion the power of art, embracing the responsibility to engage and educate the community, contribute cultural knowledge, and advance creative endeavor."

The strong partnership between the practitioner (Molly Kysar, Head of Teaching Programs) and internal evaluator (Sharisse Butler) has been an important aspect of this evaluation. As valued stakeholders, docents were also given a voice in the evaluation process. Docents completed questionnaires where they self-identified areas of strengths and weaknesses in their own teaching in relation to the stated

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[1] Sweney, Barbara Zollinger (2008). "Docents as Meaning Makers: The Frontline of the Museum Learning Experience." *From Periphery to Center: Art Museum Education in the 21st Century*. National Art Education Association.

[2] The following works provide a theoretical backdrop for the Teaching Programs staff philosophy, as well as the goal and objectives written for the docent program: Barrett, Terry (2003). *Interpreting Art: Reflecting, Wondering, and Responding*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill higher Education; Burnham, Rika and Elliott Kai-Kee (2005). "The Art of Teaching in the Museum." *Journal of Aesthetic Education, Vol. 39, No. 1*; McCarthy, Bernice (2000). *About Learning*. Wauconda, IL: About Learning, Inc.

objectives, and this feedback will also inform future docent trainings. In addition, a small panel of docents were told about the evaluation prior to the announcement to the entire group. They were invited to voice their own concerns, predict others' concerns, advise Kysar and Butler on the dissemination of the information, as well as become advocates for the evaluation among their peers. Findings were presented to docents October 19, 2009, and there is evidence that this presentation has already caused docents to be increasingly reflective about their own practice. One docent emailed that very afternoon, saying, "it made me think about how I tour," and went on to share specific thoughts about her own touring history and style. Another docent wrote at the end of the following day, "Wish you had observed tours today--everyone that I talked to was trying to use open ended questions, use every learning style possible and watch high falutin' vocabulary." Some of the comments shared by docents during the presentation have been incorporated into the discussion of possible interpretations and implications of findings. The deliberate decisions made throughout the process to work collaboratively are rooted in theories such as Michael Quinn Patton's utilization-focused evaluation that emphasize direct involvement of intended users for the purpose of increasing use and value.[3]

During the 2008-2009 school year, 53 docents were observed giving the same tour, the DMA 4th-grade tour called "A Looking Journey." The following is the description of the tour that appears on the DMA Web site: "Take an interactive journey through the magical world of art by looking carefully, thinking critically, and paying attention to what you feel." Docents design their own tours within this broad framework that emphasizes close looking, and they have the freedom to use any objects from among the Museum's entire collections and most special exhibitions. While selecting a single tour helped eliminate variables such as age and specific content, there were additional reasons for this choice. The flexibility afforded docents in this tour allows for the greatest opportunities to meet the teaching objectives. Additionally, it was an opportunity to learn more about the student experience in a new partnership with the Dallas Independent School District (DISD). This is the second year the Museum has provided a docent-guided visit for each 4th grader in DISD (over 10,000 students), thanks to a program made possible by a Wallace Foundation grant. Due to the scale of the initiative and its potential impact on the community, the DMA is dedicated to providing tours that meet the program goal. This study of docent teaching practices during these tours is enabling staff to provide training that best supports docents' needs so that ultimately the goal for the student experience can be met.

[3] Patton, Michael Quinn (2008). *Utilization-Focused Evaluation, 4th edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Notes on Language

- "Behaviors" refer in this report to the observed actions by docents that relate specifically to those actions articulated in the "K-12 Docent-Guided Tours Goal and Objectives" (Appendix C).
- A "stop" is the total experience that takes place before a single work of art. Occasionally docents refer to more than one work of art at a stop, but these works are in close proximity and are tied together in some thematic way by the docent. (The choice for stops to be the primary unit of measure is detailed in the Methodology section on page 12.)

Tour Descriptions

As was mentioned above, docents have a great deal of freedom in creating "A Looking Journey" tours. For that reason, it is useful to both docents and staff to know whether certain galleries and works of art are used frequently, how many works of art are typically used on tours, and what impact those choices may have on the tour experience.

- The median number of stops on observed tours was 6. Some behaviors were found to have a statistically significant relationship to the number of stops included on a tour. The following behaviors occurred more often on tours with 6 stops or less: orients to the building; introduces tour theme; encourages close looking; asks for visual evidence for ideas; facilitates personal or human connections; incorporates a writing activity; incorporates a kinesthetic activity; incorporates a sketching activity; uses physical props; and addresses multiple learning styles at least once on stop through the use of writing, kinesthetic, sketching activities or physical props (all the previous combined). (See page 16 on the relationship between these activities and multiple learning styles.) Also occurring more often on tours with 6 stops or less was the behavior of asks unreasonable or unanswerable closed questions. (See page 8 for more on this.)
- The majority of works of art toured on "A Looking Journey" tours were sculptures/installations. Paintings were the second most type of work of art used.
- The following were the most toured gallery areas, in order from the most frequently used: Colonial and Modern America, Europe, Olafur Eliasson's special exhibition *Take Your Time*, Asia, Egypt, and Ancient America.
- The following works of art were the most toured, and used on more than one-quarter of tours, in order from the most frequently used: *Icebergs*, *Horankh*, *Room for one color*, *Approaching Storm*, *Mummy*, *Canopic Jars*, and *Lokapala*.
- More than half of docent tours included at least one "mini-stop," where the docent takes a student group by a work of art and draws attention to it, sometimes for purposes of comparison with other works seen on the tour, but does not fully stop to discuss the work. (Behaviors were not observed during these occurrences.)

Docent Demographics

The single demographic considered in relation to docent behaviors was whether docents received their intensive first year of training within the past five years from the time of the evaluation. Five years was a somewhat arbitrary way of defining the recent past, though it did represent a change in staff as well as a time the department began more deliberately emphasizing multiple learning styles. The program goal and objectives, having been articulated only in the past year, were born of more recent educational philosophies, and so it may be that docents receiving their first year of training in more recent years had those objectives emphasized to a greater degree. Taking this demographic into consideration might help staff better understand how the more current topics and methods of docent training impacted docent behaviors.

- The following behaviors were found to have a statistically significant relationship to the year the docent was originally trained (or length of time in the program), where these behaviors occurred more often on tours or at stops where the docent was originally trained in 2003 or later: Clearly and positively introduces Museum behavior guidelines at the beginning of the tour; Listens and positively responds to all student ideas; Encourages close looking; Asks open-ended questions; Incorporates a writing activity; Incorporates a kinesthetic activity; Incorporates a sketching activity; Uses physical props; Addresses multiple learning styles at least once on stop through the use of writing, kinesthetic, sketching activities or physical props (all the previous combined). Docents originally trained in 2003 or later also made fewer stops during the tour.

Docent Objectives Observed

The "Objectives for Docent Teaching" (listed on Appendix C) formed the basis of the behaviors that were considered in observations of tours. For the most part, those under the heading of "providing a foundation for learning" could occur once on a tour, possibly during an introduction or conclusion. Those under the heading of "providing guidance in tour content" had the potential of occurring at every stop.

- The following findings regarding observed behaviors at introductions and conclusions call for particular attention. Only 62% of docents introduced a tour theme. 21% of docents did not introduce Museum guidelines. Only 47% of docents invited students to return to visit the Museum again. 26% of docents did not return to a theme during the tour or at the end of the tour, and did not review objects at the end. Almost 3 times as many docents reviewed objects at the end as those who returned to the tour theme.
- The following findings regarding observed behaviors at tour stops call for particular attention. While at 82% of stops docents encouraged close looking, at only 20% of stops did docents ask for visual evidence of ideas. While these two behaviors would not be expected at every stop, the following percentages of occurrences are low: gives time to look, think, reflect on own (non-directed looking) at 11% of stops, and facilitates personal/human connections at 35% of stops. At only 15% of stops did docents ask open-ended questions, and at 13% of stops docents asked unreasonable or unanswerable closed questions. 87% of docents addressed multiple learning styles through an activity or use of prop at least once on tour; however, the percentage of stops where these behaviors occurred was very low. At 28% of stops, docents used content and/or vocabulary that is not age-appropriate (and vocabulary was not defined).
- Certain behaviors happened more often at particular types of gallery areas. The following generally occurred more often in Western galleries: listens and positively responds to all ideas, encourages close looking, asks for visual evidence of ideas, asks open-ended questions, facilitates other senses activities, and uses content and/or vocabulary not age-appropriate. The following generally occurred more often in non-Western galleries: sketching activities. Asking unreasonable or unanswerable closed questions and giving incorrect and/or culturally insensitive information occurred less often at more contemporary Western galleries and the Center for Creative Connections (C3). Kinesthetic activities occurred most often in Contemporary and Asian galleries. Non-directed time to look, think, reflect occurred most often in the Eliasson exhibition and C3.

Docent Questionnaire

Docents reported through a questionnaire which teaching objectives they found most challenging and which came most naturally.

- Docents' self-report that facilitating activities toward multiple learning styles and that providing a conclusion are both challenging, corresponds to what was observed.

- Docents' self-report that engaging the students and encouraging participation through eye contact, body language, and voice level come naturally, also corresponds to what was observed.
- Docents' self-report that asking open-ended and answerable questions comes naturally, was at odds with the findings, where it was only observed to occur at 15% of stops. This reveals a discrepancy between staff and docent understandings of what constitutes an open-ended question. Also at odds with observational findings was the comparison of docents' self-report that encouraging students to look closely and provide visual evidence for their ideas comes naturally. While docents encouraged close looking at 82% of stops, they only asked students to provide visual evidence for their ideas at 20% of stops.

Student Responses

Docents asked students the following question at the end of their observed tour: "What is your favorite thing you learned today?" The term "learned" was used not in order to discover whether specific learning goals were achieved, but rather to discover the depth to which students were responding to and connecting with works of art on the tours.

- A preliminary look into the relationship between docent behaviors and student experiences may indicate that facilitating personal or human connections, asking open-ended questions, keeping tours to 6 stops or fewer, and engaging students in activities directed toward multiple learning styles leads to deeper responses from students.

DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Asking students to look closely and ground their ideas in what can be seen

Encouraging students to look closely is one of the teaching objectives which is expected to occur at every stop. It was observed to take place at 82% of the stops, which is high, but still has room for improvement. One behavior that is not listed as a teaching objective, and therefore was not specifically captured, is storytelling. Docents have received some training in telling stories, and through casual observation, tend to be very good at it. It is a way docents engage the students and maintain their attention, and program managers may even decide that it should be incorporated into the objectives. However, it should be noted that good storytelling about the provenance or cultural context of objects does not necessarily lead to close looking. Objects such as the Gothic Bed and Icebergs have interesting histories, and those stories are engaging to students. Likewise, students sitting before the mummy and *Horankh* can learn many interesting and engaging facts about ancient Egyptian civilization. These stories and histories should be paired, however, with encouragement to look at the works themselves; otherwise, students are learning what could be learned in a classroom or in a setting without original works of art. Another behavior that was observed but not specifically captured for the purposes of this study, was the technique of compare and contrast. Unlike storytelling, encouraging students to compare and contrast two works almost always leads them to look more closely. Program managers may want to consider ways to have docents model this technique to one another and share stories of when and how they have felt it strengthened their tours.

While docents were observed to encourage close looking at 82% of the stops, they were only observed to ask students for visual evidence to support their ideas at 20% of stops. An example of a question that docents used to encourage close looking occurred before Pissarro's *Apple Picking at Eragny-sur-Epte*. There, a number of docents asked students what season they thought was depicted. If a docent wanted to encourage them to provide visual evidence, he or she might then ask, "What do you see that makes you think it is summer?" Often, students give unpredicted responses to questions that ultimately have one right answer. Docents may not want to follow up such responses with more questions because that could take the conversation in an undesired direction. For example, when looking at the African *Elephant mask*, many docents had students guess what animal was represented. If a student were to guess something surprising, such as a tiger, it may be tempting to simply move on to other answers until someone gets it right. However, a follow-up question about what the student sees that makes them say tiger, could reveal that the student is focusing on the zigzag pattern, and that may lead to a productive and affirming conversation. It may be more natural to follow up open-ended questions (unlike this example) with questions about visual evidence. If a docent were to ask an open-ended question, such as, "What makes this work of art different than anything else we've seen?" (and no particular answer is desired or expected), asking follow-up questions may flow more naturally from the docent's curiosity.

Asking for visual evidence of ideas occurred much more often in European galleries than in others, and within Europe, it occurred three times more often at Vernet's *Approaching Storm* than other works of art. Docents could be asked to reflect on why it may occur naturally at the Vernet, and also, what questions or conversations are likely to precede this behavior. Then docents could practice applying this approach to non-narrative works of art.

Defining an open-ended question

Findings reveal that there is a significant discrepancy between what docents understand to be open-ended questions and what staff means by open-ended questions. According to the results from the Docent Questionnaire collected in October 2008, docents feel that asking open-ended questions is one of their strengths. By program managers' standards, it was only observed to occur at 15% of tour stops.

Docents were indeed observed to ask many questions during tours, but relatively few were open-ended in nature, where open-ended is defined as not having one right or anticipated answer. When a docent asks an open-ended question, it means he or she does not know the answer to the question. Nina Simon says that good questions "are genuinely interesting and trigger a learning response for both the person who chooses to answer and those who prefer to simply observe." She also says that the "golden rule" for asking good questions is being "truly interested in their answers."[4] Open-ended questions reveal a genuine interest in responses. Findings in Appendix A show that there may be a connection between asking open-ended questions and the level of student response to tours.

It is assumed that there are a variety of good types of questions that can be asked that are not open-ended. For example, a docent may ask a question that has only one (or two) right answers, but the answers can be discovered through close looking. At the other end of the spectrum are unreasonable or unanswerable closed questions. These were defined as questions that have one right answer, but where the students did not have the required information to answer. Sometimes this took the form of "fill-in-the-blank" questions, such as asking students what the bottom of a painting is called, and trying to encourage the answer by telling them "it starts with an f." This was observed to occur at least once at 12% of stops. Docents may not always be aware of how strongly students want to please them be getting the "right" answer. Students seemed to shut off any real thinking in search of the correct answer. It may be useful to research this dynamic and learn whether this is typical for this particular age group, and whether it is a dynamic for which fourth-grade classroom teachers have advice.

Given the findings, asking questions would be a useful topic for a docent training session. During such a session, it may be constructive to point out to docents that asking open-ended questions was observed more often in Western gallery areas. Docents may need encouragement in feeling comfortable asking open-ended questions in non-Western galleries, where they may be appropriately focusing their efforts on sharing correct information. Olga Hubard, of Teachers College Columbia University, writes, "Despite the importance of the cultural significance of an object, be cautious of presenting cultural meanings as truth to the exclusion of personal responses."[5]

Also of note is the fact that unreasonable or unanswerable closed questions were never observed in the following areas: Contemporary, Eliasson, Two x Two x Ten, and the Center for Creative Connections. Contemporary works may lend themselves naturally to more open questions. Contextual information may not be available with these works, either by artist intent or due to the current nature of the context. It may be useful for docents to imagine transferring the types of questions they feel comfortable asking with contemporary works to works in other collections.

Fewer stops lead to richer experiences for students

While it may be common sense to some degree to recognize that more fulfillment of teaching objectives occur on tours with fewer stops, it may be useful to have that fact statistically revealed in this study. (It is surprising, however, that more occurrences of docents asking unreasonable or unanswerable closed questions occurred on tours with 6 stops or less. Yet, a tour group trying to navigate through an unreasonably difficult question may in fact require more time at a stop.) During the training session where these findings were shared with docents, some of them explained that they feel pressure from teachers who desire that their students see many objects. Docents may need to be equipped with responses and information to provide teachers on the value of spending more time with fewer works of art.

[4] Simon, Nina. (2009). "You Talking to Me?" *Museum*, Sept/Oct 2009. American Association of Museums.
[5] Hubard, Olga M. (2007). "Productive Information: Contextual Knowledge in Art Museum Education." Highbeam.com, reprinted from a National Art Education Association Jul 2007 publication.

Activities require time and mean fewer stops

Docents who were originally trained in 2003 or later had fewer stops on their tours, and also more often incorporated activities geared toward addressing multiple learning styles. These activities are more time-consuming than simple dialogue, as many docents noted on their questionnaires. Docents may need further convincing of the value of these activities for the student experience. This may come through additional reading and discussion on the subject, as well as exposure to evidence within our program of the benefits. A starting point is the evidence in this present study that students on tours where none of these activities took place (and props were not used) did not offer a higher level of response to the final question. (See Appendix A.) Docents who have been in the program longer and were originally trained at an earlier date may also need more guidance in how to lead these activities in a way that does not take more time than they would like to allot. It can be difficult to ask students to complete a task in a short amount of time, and particular communication styles and activity parameters may be required.

Introductions and conclusions

While almost all docents offered some kind of introductory comments at the beginning of their tours, a little less than two-thirds introduced a theme for their tours. Some docents may be motivated by research indicating that framing a tour with some kind of theme makes the experience richer and more memorable for students. About one-fifth of docents did not discuss the Museum's guidelines for behaviors. While some docents may simply forget to do this, others may feel that beginning a tour with "rules" would cause students to have a negative experience. However, on a number of the tours where rules about not touching were not addressed at the beginning, it did become a problem later in the tour, which may have led to a less positive experience than discussing them at the beginning would have been. Docents may benefit from having positive ways of addressing the guidelines modeled for them.

Through their questionnaire responses, docents admitted that it can be challenging to remember to keep track of the time and allow enough for a conclusion at the end of a tour. About a quarter of docents observed neither reviewed objects nor the tour theme at the end of the tour. This may also relate to the pressure some docents feel (either from teachers or self-imposed) to show students many works of art. Docents may need encouragement to make conclusions a priority. If the tour is framed as an hour-long dialogue, a conclusion could be discussed as being a natural way to bring the discussion to a close and to help make the dialogue memorable for students. Docents may benefit from a conversation about what constitutes a good conclusion, considering almost three times as many docents reviewed objects compared to those who reviewed the tour theme. Finally, more docents can be challenged to remember to invite students to return to the Museum, as that is important enough to be part of the program goal. Some docents include a list of the Museum's free hours on a handout, which saves them the pressure of remembering to mention it.

Experiencing wonderment through non-directed time to look, think, and reflect

The philosophy of the Museum's Teaching Programs department prioritizes the experience of wonder. This is evidenced in the tour experiences sometimes offered called "un-tours," where students are given permission to direct their own gallery experiences. Giving students time to look at works of art, and think and reflect on their own, is thought to create opportunities for students to follow their own interests and experience wonder. This can even occur through an activity if the students are given the freedom to follow their own thoughts and create their own meanings. Docents were observed to give students room for this much more often in the Eliasson exhibition and in the Center for Creative Connections than in any other gallery areas. It may be useful for docents to brainstorm on how the Eliasson experience, which lent itself so naturally to this behavior, might be transferred to other works of art.

Sensitivity to age and socio-economic situation
At almost a quarter of the stops observed, docents used content or vocabulary that was not age-appropriate for fourth-graders. (See footnote number 33 and Appendix B for definitions, criteria used, and examples.) This occurred most often in Western gallery areas. It seems that docents are least aware that they may be using unfamiliar vocabulary in the areas where they themselves are most comfortable. For example, docents are so used to using terms like "Impressionism" that they forget to define it for young visitors. It may be enough to change docent behavior by drawing their attention to the frequency of these occurrences, and sharing with them the list in Appendix B. Docents may even add to this list based on reflections on their own tours. The content that was observed to be inappropriate had less to do with the students' age, and more to do with their possible socio-economic status. Again, this may be something that docents simply need reminding of, and having it pointed out them through the findings of this study may help. Information about potential words that need defining and topics that require special sensitivity as they relate to particular gallery areas or exhibitions can continue to be addressed in Docent Guides.

Some works of art used repeatedly
One of the values of the "A Looking Journey" tour is that stops can occur before any work of art in the Museum on display. While it may be expected that some works of art are more popular with docents than others, attention may need to be given to the fact that a number of individual objects were used on more than a quarter of observed tours. Docents may feel most comfortable with particular works, as well as particular gallery areas, and need to be encouraged to experiment with less familiar works. It was observed, and docents attest to the fact that crowding by tour groups in the galleries is a problem. These findings may encourage docents to consider using other objects. Docents may benefit from a group conversation about what makes certain objects so popular to use, and what other objects may allow for equally rich experiences. Docents claim that some of these objects, such as the mummy, are often requested by teachers. Perhaps touring with those objects could be reserved for special requests, and avoided in the absence of specific requests. In addition, docents may have particular objects in mind to suggest to teachers as replacements, knowing that teachers may benefit from more education about the breadth of our collections and may be open to suggestions outside of what is familiar.

Future studies
Molly Kysar, Head of Teaching Programs, is offering three docent training sessions during the 2009-2010 school year based upon findings from this study. The content of those sessions will center around some of the areas discussed above in this section. It could be useful to do some follow-up studies in the 2010-2011 school year on the areas addressed in order to discover whether the training sessions led to improved performance on tours. This could be done through observations of a small random sample of docents.

An important next step for assessing the impact of this program will be an evaluation of student experiences. A sample of students participating on tours could be interviewed immediately after the tour, two to three months following the tour, and again six months to a year after the tour. The primary goal for the evaluation would be to discover to what degree and in what ways the following stated program goal is being met: "On docent-guided tours, students will experience the Museum as a comfortable place to visit and return to, discover that works of art are relevant to their lives, and begin to see their world in a fresh way."

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

Following are the questions pursued through this evaluation. Most are based in the "Objectives for Docent Teaching," found in Appendix C.

1. To what extent are docents providing an introduction that clearly and positively orients students to the building, the guidelines, and the tour content or theme?
2. To what extent are docents engaging the students and encourage participation through eye contact, body language, and voice level?
3. To what extent are docents presenting content and using vocabulary that is age-appropriate?
4. To what extent are docents providing correct and culturally sensitive information?
5. To what extent are docents providing a conclusion that wraps up the tour and invite students to return?
6. To what extent are docents encouraging close and careful looking at works of art?
7. To what extent are docents encouraging students to take an active role in their own learning by facilitating activities directed towards multiple learning styles?
8. To what extent are docents giving students time to look, think, and reflect on their own?
9. To what extent are docents listening to and responding positively to all student ideas?
10. To what extent are docents asking open-ended questions and questions that are answerable?
11. To what extent are docents facilitating the making of personal and/or human connections?
12. How many works of art, and which works of art, are docents using on "A Looking Journey" tours?
13. Are certain objectives more or less likely to be met by docents when using particular works of art or gallery areas?
14. Are certain objectives more or less likely to be met by docents based on the number of works used on a tour?
15. Are there relationships between when a docent entered the program and received initial training and the meeting of particular objectives?
16. Are there obvious significant connections between docent practice and student learning?

METHODOLOGY

PLANNING

Research was conducted into how other museums go about evaluating docent teaching practices. Evaluation strategies and forms were collected from eleven museums, including the Indianapolis Museum of Art, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the Saint Louis Zoo, Wadsworth Atheneum, and the Rochester Museum and Science Center. Strategies included peer evaluations, self-evaluations, and observations by staff, and various combinations of these. Eight of the eleven had staff members observing the docents on a tour. Four of the eleven used a Likert scale rating (ex. unsatisfactory to excellent) in the evaluation form. All of them asked for comments to be made regarding objectives as they were observed overall on the tour.

These evaluation forms from other museums were most informative in planning in the ways that 1) the types of behaviors observed were broken into categories (such as the University of Michigan Museum of Art's categories of structure, content, presentation, and logistics), and 2) that delivery or presentation behaviors were included in observations. Preliminary observations made during the spring of 2008 for this study confirmed that behaviors related to presentation, which were initially assumed but not articulated in early drafts of the objectives for docent teaching, should be included and stated outright. It was also determined that these types of behaviors should be distinguished from those more closely related to content, so the two categories of "providing a foundation for learning" and "providing guidance in tour content" were developed (see Appendix C).[6]

A study on the presence of specific critical thinking skills in multiple-visit programs, which involved the Dallas Museum of Art, was also considered.[7] For that study, behaviors were counted each time they were observed. So while the evaluation forms collected from other museums made the entire tour the unit of observation, this study into critical and creative thinking skills used single occurrences as the unit of observation. It was determined for the present study, that instead, using each stop before a work of art made by docents as the unit of observation would be most useful. Preliminary observations were conducted in order to develop and refine the observation tool.

DATA COLLECTION

Observations were conducted of docents giving "A Looking Journey" 4th-grade tours. The observation tool employed is based loosely on the concept of tracking and timing observations.[8] Docent behaviors were observed by stops at works of art, a compromise between the daunting task of counting total behaviors observed, and simply assigning a docent a single rating on each behavior. This approach yielded more useful information to the practitioner by providing a picture of the experience created at each stop. Taken together, data collected by tour stops formed a picture of the entire tour experience.

Originally, it was hoped that the 70-80 docents who regularly give student tours would be observed, though it was recognized that this was an ambitious undertaking. While the primary focus of the

[6] Barbara Zollinger Sweney (2008) also distinguishes "information" from "touring techniques," and identifies the "theme" as the third element for a successful docent-guided tour.
[7] Luke, Jessica J., Jill Stein, Susan Foutz, and Marianna Adams (2007). "Research to Practice: Testing a Tool for Assessing Critical Thinking in Art Museum Programs." *Journal of Museum Education*, v. 32, no. 2.
[8] Serrell, Beverly (1998). *Paying Attention: Visitors and Museum Exhibitions.* Washington, DC: American Association of Museums.

evaluation was to gain an overall understanding of how docent-led tours are implemented, a secondary goal was to observe as many individual docents as possible. The 53 docents who were observed were selected for no particular reason, and the schedule of the evaluator and the docent corresponded. The 53 docents observed were observed at 373 stops before works of art. Some of the objectives that form the basis of observed behaviors could only occur once on a tour (such as behaviors in introductions or conclusions), and the others could occur once per stop. Therefore, it is noted when a percentage is reported out of 53 tours or 53 docents, and when a percentage is reported as coming out of the 373 stops observed.

In addition to the observation data collected, each docent asked students the following impact-focused question at the end of their tour: "What was your favorite thing you learned today?" This question was asked for the following reasons: 1) answers could begin to provide concrete examples for evidence of the ultimate goal ("students begin to see their world in a fresh way"), which may inform a future impact evaluation; and 2) correlations between docent behaviors and student impact could begin to be explored.

Finally, a questionnaire was distributed to docents during a docent training session on October 27, 2008. At that time, they were given a handout of the goal for docent-guided tours and the objectives for docent teaching which serve as the basis of the evaluation. Docents shared which objectives they personally find most challenging, and which objectives they feel come most naturally to them. 32 docents completed the questionnaire, either at that moment, or through a SurveyMonkey questionnaire online.

ANALYSIS

Data were analyzed using SPSS 17.0 (now called PAWS 17.0) for Windows, statistical software for personal computers. For all statistical tests, a 0.05 level of significance was used to preclude findings of little practical significance.[9] Only statistically significant findings are reported. To examine the relationship between two categorical variables, cross-tabulation tables were computed and the chi-square statistic was used to test the significance of the relationship. For example, the gallery area (such as Classical) and was tested against particular docent behaviors (such as asking open-ended questions) to determine if the two variables are related.

Frequency distributions were also calculated for all categorical variables. For example, frequencies of particular docent behaviors (such as asking open-ended questions) within the number of tour stops where the behavior was possible are documented. Summary statistics, such as the median, were also run. For example, the median number of stops on a tour are documented.[10]

Two data sets were used during analysis, one in which docents were treated as cases, and one in which individual stops were treated as cases. The data from observations was the same in both data sets. Analysis of behaviors that could only occur once during a tour, such as the introduction of the tour theme, or, when the docent demographic of whether they were first trained in the past five years, required use of the docent as the case. Analysis of behaviors associated with individual stops that could occur multiple times required use of the stop as case.

[9] When the level of significance is set to $p = 0.05$, any finding that exists at a probability (p-value) ≤ 0.05 is "significant." When a finding, such as a relationship between two variables, has a p-value of 0.05, it means there is only a 5 percent probability that this relationship was found as a result of chance.

[10] Median is a measure of central tendency, similar to the mean (average). It is often more accurate in describing the central tendency, and is the number at which half the cases fall above that number and half the cases fall below it.

FINDINGS: DEMOGRAPHICS OF SCHOOL GROUPS AND DOCENTS

School Group Demographics

DISD vs. non-DISD school groups

75% of tour groups observed for this evaluation were from the Dallas Independent School District. This is representative, as 72% of the 194 schools that came during the 2008-09 school year for an "A Looking Journey" tour were from DISD.

	Number of tour groups observed for evaluation (percent)	Total number of schools who had ALJ tours during 2008-09 (percent)
DISD school group	40 (75%)	139 (72%)
non-DISD school group	13 (24%)	55 (28%)
TOTAL	53 (100%)	194 (100%)

Number of Students on Tours

median = 13
mode = 14 (On 13 of the tours, there were 14 students.)
min = 7, max = 19

Docent Demographics

Entered docent program in previous 5 years vs. Entered docent program 6 years or more prior to evaluation

42% of docents observed for this evaluation entered the docent program in 2003 or later. This is fairly representative, as 31% of the 101 day docents in the 2008-09 school year had been originally trained in 2003 or later.

	Number of docents observed for evaluation (percent)	Total number of docents in docent program in 2008-09 (percent)
Entered docent program in 2003 or later	22 (42%)	31 (31%)
Entered docent program prior to 2003	31 (58%)	70 (69%)
TOTAL	53 (100%)	101 (100%)

It was noted whether the docents observed had received their first year of training within the past five years from the time of the evaluation in order to understand how the more recent methods of docent training impacted docent behaviors. The program goal and objectives were articulated very recently, and so it may be that docents receiving their first year of training more recently had the following behaviors emphasized to a greater degree. The following behaviors were found to have a statistically significant relationship to being originally trained in 2003 or later.

Museum behavior guidelines being clearly and positively introduced at the beginning of the tour[11]
91% of the docents who entered the program in 2003 or later introduced the Museum guidelines in a clear manner during their introduction, as compared to the 65% of docents who entered the program prior to 2003. The 5 docents who did not introduce guidelines at all were trained prior to 2003.

Number of stops made during the tour[12]
The average number of stops made by docents who entered the program in 2003 or later was 6.09. This is compared to the average number of stops made by docents who entered the program prior to 2003, which was 7.71. (Another way this difference is manifested is by noting that while 41.5% of docents observed who entered the program in 2003 or later, only 36% of all individual stops were given by docents who entered the program in 2003 or later.)

Listens and positively responds to all student ideas[13]
At 96% of the stops toured by docents who entered the program in 2003 or later, the docent listened and positively responded to all student ideas. In comparison, at 84% of the stops toured by docents who entered the program prior to 2003, the docent listened and positively responded to all student ideas.

Encourages close looking[14]
At 91% of the stops toured by docents who were trained in 2003 or later, the docent encouraged close looking at the work of art. In comparison, at 77% of the stops toured by docents who were trained prior to 2003, the docent encouraged close looking.

Asks open-ended questions[15]
At 22% of the stops toured by docents who entered the program in 2003 or later, the docent asked an open-ended question. In comparison, at 11% of the stops toured by docents who entered the program prior to 2003, the docent asked an open-ended question.

Incorporates a writing activity[16]
At 10% of the stops toured by docents who were trained in 2003 or later, the docent incorporated a writing activity. In comparison, at 4% of the stops toured by docents who were trained prior to 2003, the docent incorporated a writing activity.

Incorporates a kinesthetic activity[17]
At 19% of the stops toured by docents who entered the program trained in 2003 or later, the docent incorporated a kinesthetic activity. In comparison, at 9% of the stops toured by docents who entered the program prior to 2003, the docent incorporated a kinesthetic activity.

[11] Guidelines clearly introduced $p = .028$; Guidelines positively introduced $p = .040$
[12] $p = .031$ (This was run with an ANOVA table.)
[13] $p = .000$
[14] $p = .001$
[15] $p = .005$
[16] $p = .034$
[17] $p = .005$

Incorporates a sketching activity[18]

At 8% of the stops toured by docents who entered the program in 2003 or later, the docent incorporated a sketching activity. In comparison, at 1% of the stops toured by docents who entered the program prior to 2003, the docent incorporated a sketching activity.

Uses physical props[19]

At 22% of the stops toured by docents who were trained in 2003 or later, the docent used of a physical prop. In comparison, at 12% of the stops toured by docents who were trained prior to 2003, the docent used of a physical prop.

Addresses multiple learning styles at least once on stop through the use of writing, kinesthetic, sketching activities or physical props (all the above combined)[20]

At 53% of the stops toured by docents who were trained in 2003 or later, the docent addressed multiple learning styles through activities or the use of a physical prop. In comparison, at 26% of the stops toured by docents who were trained prior to 2003, the docent addressed multiple learning styles through activities or the use of a physical prop. Note that it is understand that there are many possible ways in which a variety of learning styles can be addressed on a tour, including other docent behaviors observed such as asking open-ended questions. Teaching Programs staff feels that incorporating these specific kinds of activities into tour stops can increase the likelihood that particular learning styles that may not traditionally be addressed during art museum tours.

[18] $p = .002$
[19] $p = .011$
[20] $p = .000$

FINDINGS: TOUR DESCRIPTIONS

Number of Stops on Tours

median = 6
min = 3, max = 15

For each tour, the number of stops used was divided into two groups: those with 6 or fewer stops, and those with 7 or more stops. (6 was selected due to its position as median.) Whether a tour had 6 or fewer, or 7 or more stops, was then compared with other variables to find relationships. The following variables had statistically significant relationships to the number of stops used on tours.

Orients to the building[21]
Of the tours that had 6 stops or fewer, 89% included the behavior of orients to building. In comparison, only 64% of the tours with 7 or more stops included the behavior of orients to building.

Introduces tour theme[22]
Of the tours that had 6 stops or fewer, 75% included an introduction to tour theme. In comparison, only 48% of the tours with 7 or more stops included an introduction to tour theme.

Encourages close looking[23]
Of the tour stops that occurred on tours that had 6 stops or fewer, 90% included the behavior of encourages close looking. In comparison, only 77% of the tour stops that occurred on tours with 7 or more stops included the behavior of encourages close looking.

Asks for visual evidence for ideas[24]
Of the tour stops that occurred on tours that had 6 stops or fewer, 30% included the behavior of asks for visual evidence for ideas. In comparison, only 14% of the tour stops that occurred on tours with 7 or more stops included the behavior of asks for visual evidence for ideas.

Facilitates personal or human connections[25]
Of the tour stops that occurred on tours that had 6 stops or fewer, 43% included the behavior of facilitates personal or human connections. In comparison, only 30% of the tour stops that occurred on tours with 7 or more stops included the behavior of facilitates personal or human connections.

Asks unreasonable or unanswerable closed questions[26]
Of the tour stops that occurred on tours that had 6 stops or fewer, 20% included the behavior of asking unreasonable or unanswerable closed questions. In comparison, only 7% of the tour stops that occurred on tours with 7 or more stops included the behavior of asking unreasonable or unanswerable closed questions.

[21] $p = .028$
[22] $p = .043$
[23] $p = .001$
[24] $p = .000$
[25] $p = .011$
[26] $p = .000$

Incorporates a writing activity [27]
Of the tour stops that occurred on tours that had 6 stops or fewer, 12% included the behavior of incorporates a writing activity. In comparison, only 3% of the tour stops that occurred on tours with 7 or more stops included the behavior of incorporates a writing activity.

Incorporates a kinesthetic activity [28]
Of the tour stops that occurred on tours that had 6 stops or fewer, 19% included the behavior of incorporates a kinesthetic activity. In comparison, only 8% of the tour stops that occurred on tours with 7 or more stops included the behavior of incorporates a kinesthetic activity.

Incorporates a sketching activity [29]
Of the tour stops that occurred on tours that had 6 stops or fewer, 7% included the behavior of incorporates a sketching activity. In comparison, only 1% of the tour stops that occurred on tours with 7 or more stops included the behavior of incorporates a sketching activity.

Uses physical props [30]
Of the tour stops that occurred on tours that had 6 stops or fewer, 25% included the behavior of uses physical props. In comparison, only 10% of the tour stops that occurred on tours with 7 or more stops included the behavior of uses physical props.

Addresses multiple learning styles at least once on stop through the use of writing, kinesthetic, sketching activities or physical props (all the above combined) [31]
At 57% of the tour stops that occurred on tours that had 6 stops or fewer, the docent addressed multiple learning styles through activities or the use of a physical prop. In comparison, at 23% of the tour stops that occurred on tours with 7 or more stops, the docent addressed multiple learning styles through activities or the use of a physical prop.

Number of "Mini-Stops" on Tours

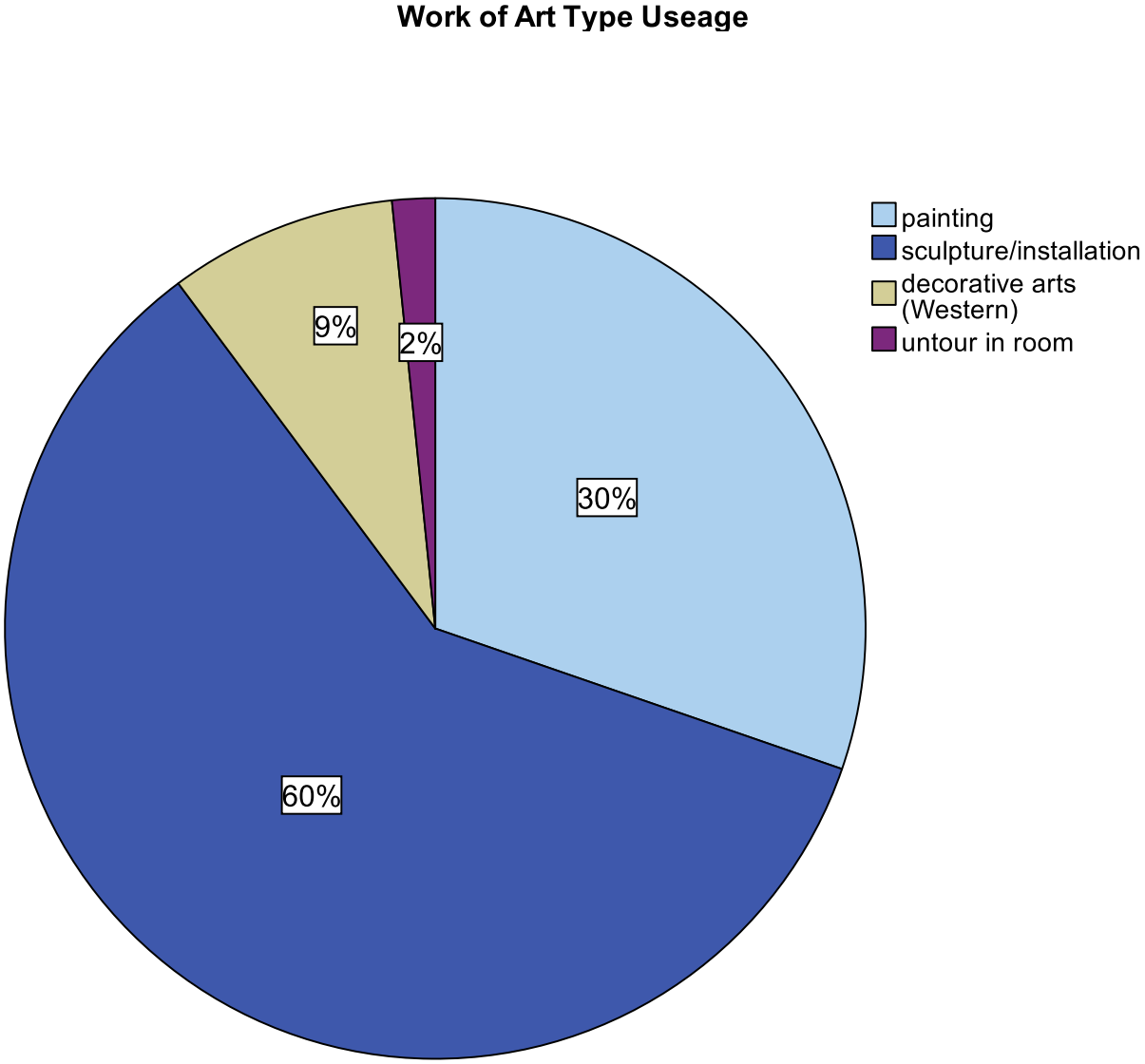
A "mini-stop" occurs when a docent takes a student group by a work of art and draws attention to it, sometimes for purposes of comparison with other works seen on the tour, but does not fully stop to discuss the work. The student group usually does not sit down. Docent objectives are not expected to be met during these occurrences, and so were observations did not include them.

total number = 54
total number of docents who included mini-stops = 33 (62%)
range of mini-stops per docent = 1 to 5

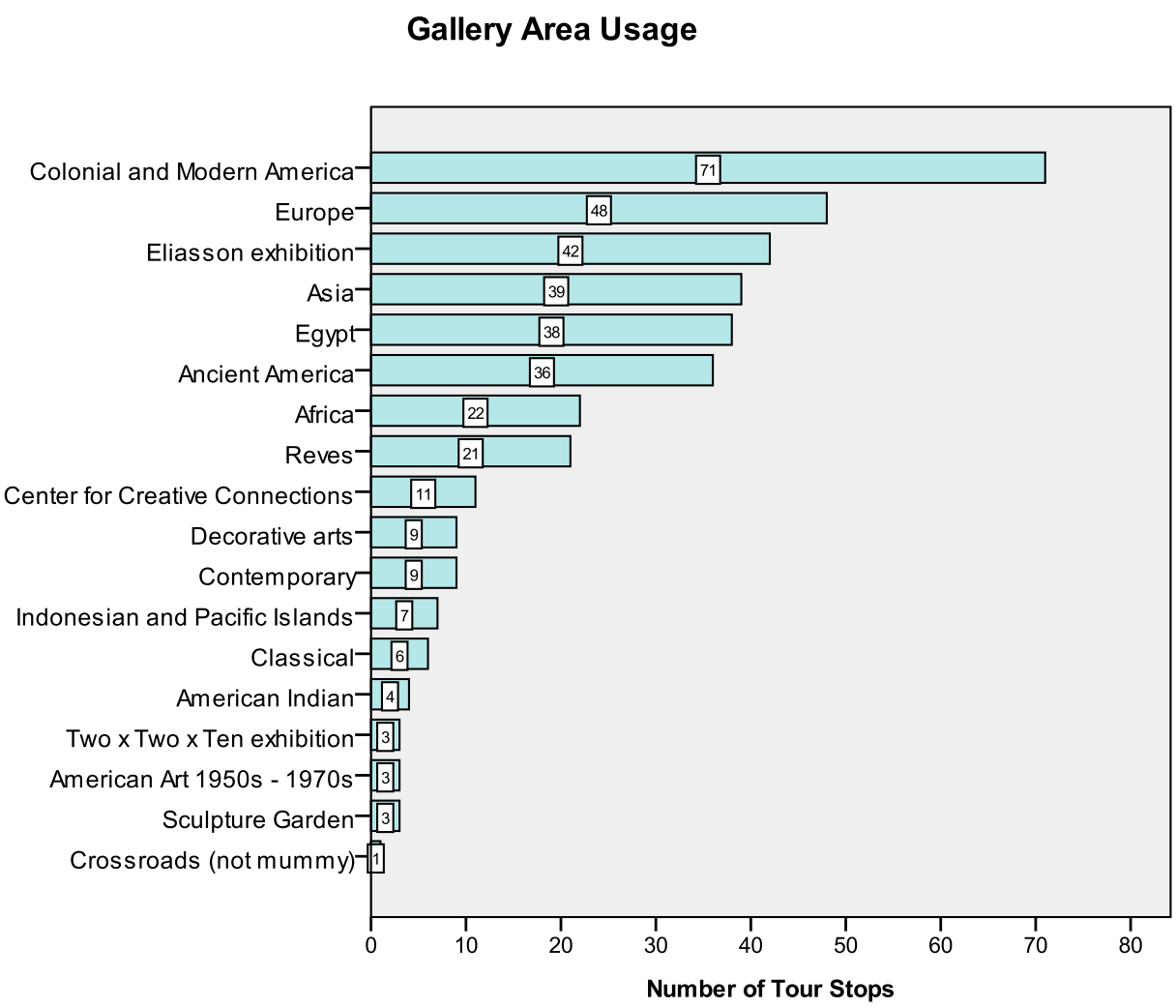
[27] $p = .000$
[28] $p = .002$
[29] $p = .004$
[30] $p = .000$
[31] $p = .000$

Number of Stops for Type of Work of Art (373 stops)

Sculpture/Installation	222
Painting	113
Decorative Arts (Western)	32
Untour	6



<u>Number of Stops in Gallery or Collections Area</u> (373 stops)



Eliasson's *Take Your Time* exhibition dates: Nov 9 – Mar 15
Two X Two X Ten exhibition dates: Oct 12 – Jan 4
American Art 1950s-1970s exhibition dates: Jan 25 – Oct 18

The Tutankhamun exhibition may account in part for the high number of stops in Egypt. Docents may have wanted to show students something from Egypt since they could not take students into the exhibition. However, docents report many teachers request that their students see the mummy every year.

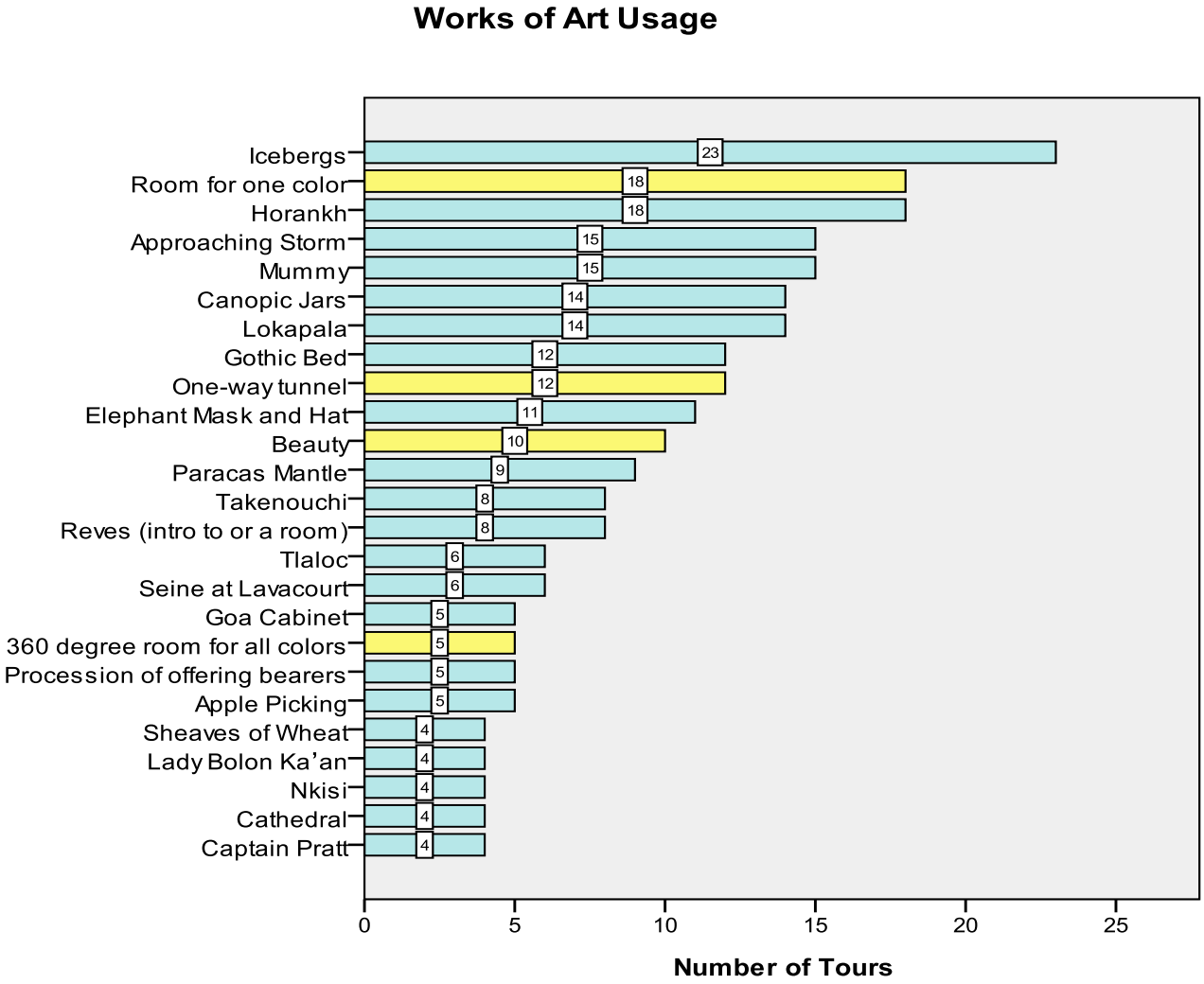
The Olafur Eliasson exhibition may account for the low number of stops in Contemporary galleries. Docents who may normally have taken students into the Contemporary galleries may have instead taken them into the exhibition. Also, fewer Contemporary works were up in the galleries due to the space demands of the exhibition.

Relationships between gallery or collections areas and behaviors were examined and the statistically significant findings are reported below on pages 23-25.

<u>Most Toured Objects</u> (used on 4 or more tours) (sometimes 2 or 3 works were combined at one stop)

The following 7 objects were used on more than one-quarter of tours:

Icebergs	23 (43% of tours)
Horankh	18 (34% of tours)
Room for one color	18 (34% of tours)
Approaching Storm	15 (28% of tours)
Mummy	15 (28% of tours)
Canopic Jars	14 (26% of tours)
Lokapala	14 (26% of tours)



Notes:

- Yellow bars represent works from the Eliasson exhibition.
- Sometimes Reves counted as one stop, and sometimes each room visited counted as separate stops, depending upon time spent. Specific works visited within Reves, such as *Sheaves of Wheat*, are counted separately. Reves was used on 8 tours, but in 16 individual stops.

FINDINGS: DOCENT OBJECTIVES OBSERVED

Percentages of Behaviors: Introductions and Conclusions (53 tours)

Introduction		
Orients to the building	77%	*n*=41
Tour theme introduced	62%	*n*=33
A handout distributed during introduction	38%	*n*=20
A globe or map used throughout the tour	15%	*n*= 8
Guidelines clearly and positively introduced	74%	*n*=39
No guidelines given at all	21%	*n*= 11
Guidelines given, but not clear	4%	*n*= 2
Guidelines given and clear, but not positive	2%	*n*= 1
Good eye contact, body language, and voice level	94%	*n*=50
No introduction at all	4%	*n*= 2
Conclusion		
Returns to tour theme at end of tour	17%	*n*= 9
Returns to tour theme throughout the tour	53%	*n* =28
Reviews objects at end of tour (beyond final question asked)	47%	*n* =25
Invites student to return to the Museum (at some point during tour)	47%	*n* =25
Did not return to theme during or at end of tour, and did not review objects at end[32]	26%	*n* =14

Percentages of Behaviors: Stops (373 stops)

Listens & positively responds to all ideas	88%	*n* =330
Encourages close looking	82%	*n* =306
Asks for visual evidence for ideas	20%	*n* = 74
Gives time to look, think, reflect on own (non-directed looking)	11%	*n* = 41
Facilitates personal/human connections	35%	*n* =132
Asks open-ended questions	15%	*n* = 55
Number of *docents* who addressed MLS through the following at least once on tour	87%	*n* = 46
Multiple Learning Styles (MLS) addressed through the following at least once on stop	36%	*n* = 134
Total number MLS addressed through the following		*n* = 158
Writing activity	6%	*n* = 23
Kinesthetic activity	12%	*n* = 46
Sketching activity	3%	*n* = 13
Props used	15%	*n* = 57
Other senses activity	5%	*n* = 19

Breakdown of other senses:

making sounds=12 (6 of these before Vernet's *Approaching Storm*)
smell=2
touch=1
both smell and touch=1
how would it [each of the senses]=2
folding paper=1

[32] This could be considered as having no conclusion, but some docents may have felt that the "favorite thing learned" question served as one.

The following sometimes happened multiple times at a single stop, but percentages and numbers reflect the times it occurred at least once at a stop:

Asks unreasonable or unanswerable closed questions	12%	*n* = 46
Content and/or vocabulary is not age-appropriate (and vocab is not defined)[33]	22%	*n* = 82
Information is incorrect and/or culturally insensitive	7%	*n* = 25

The Role of Gallery Area in Observed Behaviors

Relationships between gallery areas and all observed behaviors were examined.[34] Percentages reported are the percentages out of all tour stops which occurred within the specified gallery areas, in which the behavior occurred. Specific percentages are not reported when behaviors occurred so few times that percentages would not be meaningful, such as with the types of activities incorporated at tour stops. It is important to keep in mind that docents had the freedom to make as many (up to 15) or as few (3) stops on a tour as they liked, and individual docents are represented multiple times over the 373 tour stops.

Listens and Positively Responds to All Ideas occurred least often in Africa, where it occurred at 73% of the stops. In all other gallery areas, the behavior occurred at 83% of the stops or more.

Encourages Close Looking occurred more often in Western gallery areas: Europe, Classical, Eliasson, Two x Two x Ten, American Art 1950s – 1970s, and Sculpture Garden, with the exception of Asia, where it also more often happened. In these areas, the behavior occurred at 92% of the stops or more.

Asks for Visual Evidence of Ideas occurred at 46% of the stops in the European galleries, which was much more frequently than in other galleries. Within Europe, it occurred 3 times more often at *Approaching Storm* than other works of art.

Non-directed Time to Look, Think, Reflect occurred much more often in Eliasson (48% of stops) and the Center for Creative Connections (37% of stops) than other gallery areas.

Facilitates Personal / Human Connections occurrences were fairly evenly distributed between Western and non-Western galleries, with the highest percentage occurring in Indonesia / Pacific Islands galleries (71% of stops).

Asks Open-Ended Questions occurred more often in Western gallery areas: Europe, Colonial and Modern America, Eliasson, Decorative Arts, Two x Two x Ten, American Art 1950s – 1970s, and Sculpture Garden. In these areas, as well as the Center for Creative Connections, the behavior occurred at at least 20% of the stops.

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[33] See list of terms considered not age-appropriate when left undefined, and examples of content considered not age-appropriate, in Appendix B. Terms used during tours that were possibly not age-appropriate were recorded. These terms were reviewed separately by Molly Kysar and 4 other teachers who work with 4th graders, including one art teacher. When two or more of these 5 reviewers felt that a particular word should be removed from the list because most 4th graders would be familiar with its definition, it was removed.

[34] Crosstabs were run to examine these relationships, but significance testing with Chi Square was not run. It was determined that the most useful findings from this data would come from keeping the 18 specific gallery areas rather than grouping them into categories such as Western vs. non-Western galleries. Due to the large number of possible gallery areas (18), and given the sample size, only percentages of frequencies are reported.

Asks Unreasonable or Unanswerable Closed Questions occurred most often in the following gallery areas: Classical, American Art 1950s – 1970s, and Indonesia / Pacific Islands. What may be of more interest here are the gallery areas where this never occurred: Contemporary, Eliasson, Two x Two x Ten, and Center for Creative Connections.

Content and/or Vocabulary is Not Age-Appropriate (and Vocabulary is Not Defined) occurred most often in Western gallery areas: Europe, Classical, Reves, Decorative Arts, Colonial and Modern America. In these areas, as well as in the Center for Creative Connections, the behavior occurred at at least 25% of the stops .

Information is Incorrect and/or Culturally Insensitive occurred only in the following gallery areas: Europe, Colonial and Modern America, Africa, Egypt, Asia, Indonesia / Pacific Islands, Ancient America, and American Indian. It did not occur in the more contemporary Western gallery areas: Contemporary, Decorative Arts, Eliasson, Two x Two x Ten, American Art 1950s – 1970s, and Sculpture Garden.

Writing Activity occurred only in the following gallery areas: Europe, Colonial and Modern America galleries, Contemporary, Egypt, Classical, and Asia, Ancient America, the Center for Creative Connections, and Eliasson. This behavior occurred in gallery areas fairly evenly distributed between Western and non-Western.

Kinesthetic Activity occurred in the largest percentages in Contemporary and Asian galleries. Most of the occurrences in Contemporary were with the Pollock paintings and most in Asia were with the *Lokapala*. It also occurred comparatively more frequently in Europe, Colonial and Modern America, Africa, and the Center for Creative Connections.

Sketching Activity occurred most often in non-Western gallery areas, such as Africa, Egypt, Asia, Indonesia / Pacific Islands, and Ancient America.

Other Senses Activity occurred most often in Western gallery areas, such as Europe, Colonial and Modern America, and Eliasson, but also in Asia.

Props Used occurred most often in Colonial and Modern America, Africa, Ancient America, and Eliasson. Props most often used were contextual photographs, such as images of icebergs or masks being worn. In Eliasson, props often used were colored construction paper in *Room for one color*.

Summary of Gallery Areas Where Behaviors Occurred Most Frequently

	Western	non-Western	fairly evenly distributed	other
Listens and Positively Responds to All Ideas	X	(least often at Africa)		
Encourages Close Looking	X (plus Asia)			
Asks for Visual Evidence of Ideas	X (Europe)			
Non-directed Time to Look, Think, Reflect				most often at Eliasson and C3
Facilitates Personal / Human Connections			X	
Asks Open-Ended Questions	X (plus C3)			
Asks Unreasonable or Unanswerable Closed Questions				less often at more contemporary Western galleries and C3
Content and/or Vocabulary is Not Age-Appropriate	X (plus C3)			
Information is Incorrect and/or Culturally Insensitive				less often at more contemporary Western galleries and C3
Writing Activity			X	
Kinesthetic Activity				most often at Contemporary and Asia
Sketching Activity		X		
Other Senses Activity	X (plus Asia)			
Props Used			X	

FINDINGS: DOCENT QUESTIONNAIRE

During a docent training session on October 27, 2008, docents were introduced to the evaluation concept and logistics. At that time, they were given a handout of the goal for docent-guided tours and the objectives for docent teaching which serve as the basis of the evaluation. Docents were asked to complete a questionnaire to share which objectives they personally find most challenging, and which objectives they feel come most naturally to them. 32 docents complete the questionnaire, either at that moment, or through a SurveyMonkey questionnaire online.

Top 3 Responses from Docents

Most Challenging	% docents who listed it	**Comes Most Naturally**	% docents who listed it
Docents encourage students to take an active role in their own learning by facilitating activities directed toward multiple learning styles	34%	Docents engage the students and encourage participation through eye contact, body language, and voice level	38%
Docents provide a conclusion that wraps up the tour and they invite students to return	22%	Docents ask open-ended questions and answerable questions	34%
Docents learn (either before or during the tour) about students' previous knowledge/interests	19%	Docents encourage students to look closely and provide visual evidence for their ideas	19%

For the "most challenging" question, docents often provided explanations for their answers.

- "Docents encourage students to take an active role in their own learning by facilitating activities directed toward multiple learning styles." Docents said they feel overwhelmed by trying to keep multiple learning styles in mind while they are touring, and also that it is difficult to integrate time-consuming activities within a one-hour tour.
- "Docents provide a conclusion that wraps up the tour and they invite students to return." Docents said they often run out of time, or lose track of time, and do not provide a conclusion.
- "Docents learn (either before or during the tour) about students' previous knowledge/interests." Docents (and assigned lead docents) experience difficulties in trying to communicate with teachers prior to tours.

Comparisons Between Docent Responses and Observations

Most Challenging:

- "Docents encourage students to take an active role in their own learning by facilitating activities directed toward multiple learning styles." Such activities occurred at 36% of the stops observed (and only 27% if the use of props is not included). 87% of docents made use of these at least once during the tour (76% if the use of props is not included.) While it is not expected to occur at every stop, it is expected that one of these activities occur at least once on every tour. In that sense, docents' self-report as this being challenging corresponds to what was observed.
- "Docents provide a conclusion that wraps up the tour and they invite students to return." 47% of docents observed reviewed objects at the end of the tour, but only 17% reviewed the tour theme at the end. 47% of docents invited students to return to the Museum at some point during the tour. A dialogue about what constitutes a good conclusion may be useful to docents. Findings in

the “Student Response” section of this report may provide additional motivation to save time for a conclusion.

- “Docents learn (either before or during the tour) about students’ previous knowledge/interests.” This objective was not considered in this evaluation.

Comes Most Naturally

- “Docents engage the students and encourage participation through eye contact, body language, and voice level.” Almost all docents demonstrated positive eye contact, body language, and voice level.
- “Docents ask open-ended questions and answerable questions.” While docents were observed to ask many questions, open-ended and answerable questions were only observed to occur at 15% of stops. The discrepancy between staff’s and docent’s definitions of open-ended questions should be addressed.
- “Docents encourage students to look closely and provide visual evidence for their ideas.” While docents very often encouraged close looking (82% of stops), it was much rarer that they asked students to provide visual evidence for their ideas (20% of stops).

APPENDIX A: FINDINGS FROM STUDENT RESPONSES

Docents were asked to ask the students the following question at the end of their observed tour: "What is your favorite thing you learned today?" This question was pre-tested with student groups. The term "learned" was used not in order to discover whether specific learning goals were achieved, but rather to discover the depth to which students were responding to and connecting with works of art on the tours. Many docents reported that they often ask students "What was your favorite thing you saw today?" This question often leads to simple listing of objects, and this was an attempt to allow for students to respond in more depth. The categories of responses listed below emerged through observation. Up to 6 responses to this question were recorded per tour.

Named favorite objects only	63 students
Named a topic learned about, but no details	64 students
Recounted simple lesson learned	79 students
Recounted complex lesson learned	13 students
Told of a personal connection made	4 students
Docent's question strayed too far to count data	3 tours

Rubric for definitions and examples of rating options:

Level of Response	Name	Definition	Examples
1	Names object	Student simply says their favorite thing they saw.	"The Mummy!"
2	Names learned topic	Student gives the general topic they enjoyed learning about (or names an activity they enjoyed), but does not provide any *content* about what they learned.	"I liked learning about colors." "The story about Oedipus." "I liked standing like we did." (imitating gestures of figure)
3	Recounts simple lesson	Student goes just beyond naming the learned topic (or activity) by bringing in a little about the content they learned.	"About the Mayans [sic] and how they believed in gods." "About *Beauty*. How he used light to make rainbows." "I liked standing like the men who protect the tombs."
4	Recounts complex lesson	Student provides a more detailed description about what they learned.	*"Beauty*. When light came and hit the water it made a rainbow." "That people had problems and they solved them by nailed things into the statue."
4	Personal connection	Student personalizes what they learned or saw, and that personalization is more dominant in their comment than the lesson learned.	"I was born in Africa and I liked learning about things from my own heritage."

In an ideal situation, it would be fruitful to compare responses on this rating system to docent behaviors. In one attempt to do this, the 6 student responses on a tour were averaged, and then divided into "lower" (0 – 1.82) and "higher" (1.83-2.67) categories. When this was done, statistically significant relationships were found with the following:

- **facilitates personal or human connections:** 45% of stops where this occurred happened on tours where the response average at the end of this tour was of the higher level, and only 33% of stops where this behavior did not occur happened on tours where the response average at the end of this tour was of the higher level. (p = .020)
- **asks open-ended questions:** 51% of stops where this occurred happened on tours where the response average at the end of this tour was of the higher level, and only 35% of stops where this behavior did not occur happened on tours where the response average at the end of this tour was of the higher level. (p = .020)
- **number of tour stops:** 59% of tours with 6 or fewer stops had higher level responses, and only 26% of tours with 7 or more stops had higher level responses. (p = .019)

However, there may have been a number of factors contributing to student responses, including student personality, student-teacher dynamics, environmental factors such as the students being tired, etc. So while it is worth noting here as interesting possible relationships to explore in the future, there is not enough information to make firm claims about the relationships.

Another interesting finding related to student responses emerged. There were 7 docents who did not address **multiple learning styles** through the use of props or activities at any point on their tours. None of the students on those 7 tours responded to the question with a "level 4" response (by either recounting a complex lesson learned or told of a personal connection made).

APPENDIX B: TERMS AND CONTENT CONSIDERED NOT AGE-APPROPRIATE

APPENDIX C: K-12 DOCENT-GUIDED TOURS GOAL & OBJECTIVES

Program Goal

On docent-guided tours, students will experience the Museum as a comfortable place to visit and return to, discover that works of art are relevant to their lives, and begin to see their world in a fresh way.

Objectives for Docent Teaching	*Objectives for Student Experiences*
PROVIDING A FOUNDATION FOR LEARNING 1. Docents provide an introduction that clearly and positively orients students to the building, the guidelines, and the tour content or theme 2. Docents learn (either before or during the tour) about students' previous knowledge / interests 3. Docents reinforce guidelines in a positive manner throughout the tour when needed 4. Docents engage the students and encourage participation through eye contact, body language, and voice level 5. Docents present content and use vocabulary that is age-appropriate 6. Docents provide a conclusion that wraps up the tour and they invite students to return **PROVIDING GUIDANCE IN TOUR CONTENT** 7. Docents encourage students to look closely and provide visual evidence for their ideas 8. Docents encourage students to take an active role in their own learning by facilitating activities directed towards multiple learning styles 9. Docents create room for students to experience wonder • by giving them time to look, think, and reflect on their own • by listening to and responding positively to all student ideas 10. Docents ask open-ended questions and answerable questions 11. Docents facilitate the making of personal and/or human connections 12. The information docents provide is correct and culturally sensitive	**DEMONSTRATING A DISPOSITION FOR LEARNING** 1. Students express comfort, enjoyment, and enthusiasm 2. Students actively participate in the tour **RESPONDING TO TOUR CONTENT** 3. Students look closely and talk about what they see 4. Students participate in activities that address multiple learning styles, such as acting something out, sketching, touching something, writing, etc. 5. Students express themselves by possibly • asking questions • making statements of wonder and awe • making evaluative judgments 6. Students share new ideas by possibly • conveying a change of mind • making "I never knew" statements • connecting two or more works of art 7. Students make personal connections to works of art by possibly connecting • an artist's process and their own or someone else's creativity • subject matter and a story, object, or person from their own life • subject matter and pop culture • current and previous technologies • people from other cultures and themselves or their own culture • their own previous knowledge and new knowledge 8. Students make broad statements that indicate they may be beginning to see their world in a fresh way; these statements may be globalizing extensions of new ideas or personal connections

APPENDIX D: OBSERVATION TOOL WITH CRITERIA DEFINED