

Touring Theater Program Feasibility Study Report

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Overview

An online survey was sent to 190 educators who have participated in a SMM educational outreach activity. These activities included MathPacks, Race Teacher Workshops, Race Talking Circles Training, River Restoration Residency, Engineering is Elementary, assemblies, and trunk rental. Educators were given one week to complete the survey. A total of 73 educators responded to the survey for a 38% response rate. Educator demographics can be found on page 10.

Results & Discussion

Overall Interest

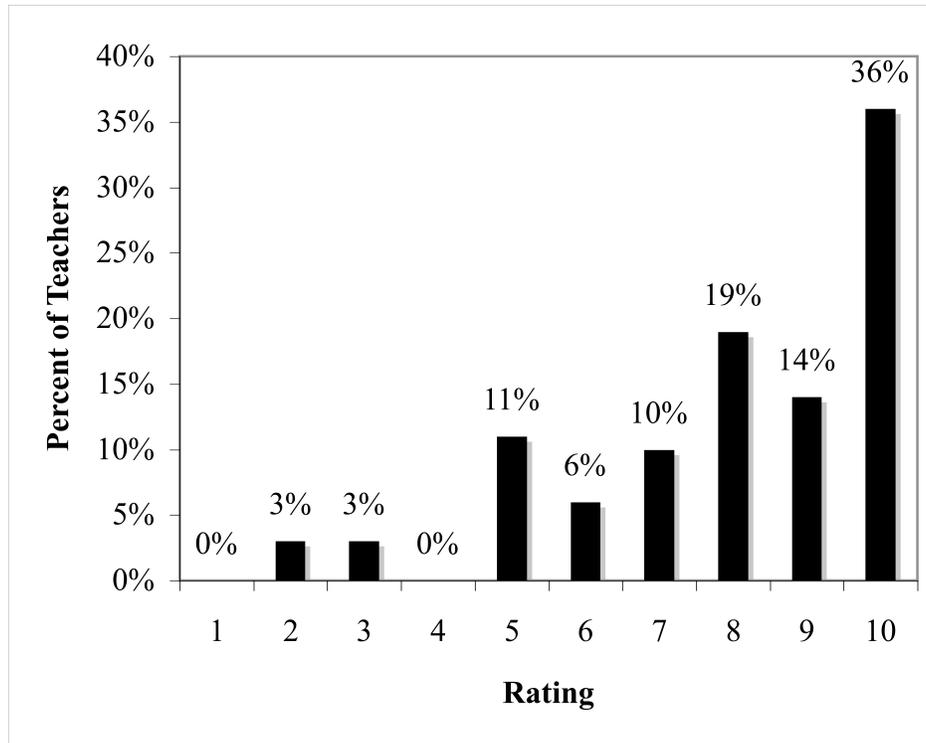
At the beginning of the survey, educators were provided with the following description of the touring theater program:

SMM would offer a variety of touring theater programs to choose from. The programs would be 90 minutes in length and include both a theater performance and a discussion or activity related to the play's topic. Programs would be available for a variety of ages from preschool to high school. To give you an idea of what types of programs the museum may offer, here are descriptions of some of the theater programs currently performed at the museum.

- **RACE TO THE FINISH LINE:** Two close friends who met in college and share an apartment together, find their friendship begin to fracture as they start to discuss the topic of race. This play should prompt us all to consider how race impacts our lives.
- **DR. CHARLES DREW:** Dr. Charles Drew speaks about his pioneering work with blood plasma and the prejudices he had to face in doing so. He was also the first African American president of the Red Cross. Dr. Drew made the difficult decision to step down from his role as Red Cross president after the government issued a mandate ordering the separation of blood according to race.
- **ELIZABETH BLACKWELL:** The first female doctor of modern times speaks about her struggle to obtain a medical education.
- **POLAR BEAR JOURNEY:** Take an imaginary trip to the Arctic Circle and meet a polar bear puppet and her two playful cubs.
- **PUMPKIN CHILD:** Hear a folktale from Iran about an old woman who has no time for bullies and a pumpkin with a delightful secret.

After reading the description, educators were asked to rate their interest in bringing a SMM theater program to their school, on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 was “not at all interested and 10 was “extremely interested”. Educators expressed high levels of interest in the program with a little more than two thirds (69%) giving a rating between 8 – 10. None of the educators said they were not at all interested (rating 1).

Interest in Theater Program (n=73)



Educators were then asked to explain their level of interest. Most educators provided explanations for their rating and representative responses are included for each rating group to illustrate why educators chose a particular rating.

Ratings 2 & 3:

- It would not fit into my curriculum.
- Not enough time in the year with other similar programs.

Rating 4 & 5:

- Lots of socially important theater groups out there but if you put an emphasis on science I would be interested in bring your group to our school.
- Could be interesting, but as the math/science middle school teacher the topics listed above wouldn't match with my curriculum. Perhaps it would go with the social studies?
- The topics, while related to science, really are not about science. They are more in the area of social studies, history, or human studies. My students would not know any more about science. We already do a large amount of history focused on the accomplishments of under recognized groups at our school. This is something classroom teachers already have materials for. Please develop theater that teaches science content.
- Climb Theater already is doing performances on race, stereotypes, bullying etc. We have been inundated with these topics over the last several years. I may be more interested if the SMM production was scientific fact rather controversial content.

Ratings 6 & 7:

- Any opportunity to open up courageous conversations about race are appreciated.
- Anything I place in my classroom must be somewhat connected to the curriculum. The topics above are interesting, but not aligned with what I need to teach.
- We get other theater groups who come to speak to students about bullying, dating, theft, etc. On the positive side, the SMM brings a quality name with it before administration even decides what subject to offer.
- I like the idea of a theater presentation, but I think 90 minutes is too long for most elementary students. It would also depend on the cost and on the topic. A program with some audience participation would also be better than one without.
- I would like to know which age group each play would be geared towards.

Ratings 8 & 9:

- I think that it is great for students to experience learning in as many different ways as possible. Learning experiences that break the routine can be very powerful and have a lingering effect.
- I like the idea of you guys coming to us. Plus, theatre is such a powerful tool. Also, with so much focus on math and literacy in the early grades, science at times gets the backburner.
- I am a big supporter of using the arts and drama to communicate. I am looking for a program to book for next year at the high school I work at.
- We are always looking for good programs to come in...looking for integration opportunities with our curriculum or for Black History Month.
- The Science Museum has an excellent track record with quality programs that are engaging and educational. The titles suggest programs relevant to our curriculum.
- We've had wonderful experience and success with touring theater programs and residency type programs, and would love the chance to see something from the Science Museum.
- I would be interested because usually the majority of the cost for a field trip comes from the busses so if the 'field trip' came to us it would help with cost. Also programs such as these hold children's interest. It is also good to have a classroom connection with follow up. Not all field trips provide this.

Rating 10:

- I would be interested in bringing the SMM out to our school because the theater experience is one many of our students do not get to experience. Also, because they are experiencing it and a part of the discussion following the performance, the learning lasts longer! Lastly, because the SMM always does fabulous work!
- I feel the topics are very important, and I feel having a powerful performance will keep the students on task and thinking of questions that they would like to explore further. I have brought my students to the SMM and the Bakken for such an experience and found it very interesting and an entertaining way to discuss science topics. It also integrates history and English for interdisciplinary units. Finally, it gets at a learning style that isn't always used for science education.
- Many of our students come from a home where English is not spoken and/or many of our students come from families with limited income. They would greatly benefit from rich experiences such as this. Any activity or presentation which would enhance the typical book, paper and pencil school activities are so helpful to the students' learning.
- Integrating science and theatre would reach students not initially interested in science.
- As an arts and science school, I would be especially interested in any connection between the two. Our students attend many plays, and always do very well with the art form.

- The touring theater programs that we have had in the past have been well received by the students and staff alike. It is like getting a glimpse into the world at the time of this character and also visualizing the person's life.
- It's often costly to take kids out on field trips. A traveling theater company could accomplish several good things at once - both theater and science. Great idea!

Audience for Touring Theater Programs

Educators were asked about potential audiences for touring theater programs. The table below illustrates the grade levels educators were interested in participating in a touring theater program. Educators expressed interest in bringing a theater program to a variety of grade levels, with the most interest in upper elementary grades.

Interest in Potential Program Audiences (n=71)

Audience	Interest in Participating
Preschool	1%
Kindergarten	18%
Grade 1	30%
Grade 2	32%
Grade 3	40%
Grade 4	47%
Grade 5	47%
Grade 6	25%
Grade 7	23%
Grade 8	21%
Grade 9	18%
Grade 10	25%
Grade 11	20%
Grade 12	18%

Educators were then asked what group size they would prefer for theater performances. Educators most frequently (45%) said they had no preference and would be interested in both large group (maximum of 100 students) and classroom performances.

Group Size Preference (n=71)

Preference	Percent of Educators
No preference, would be interested in both	45%
Large group (max. 100 students)	34%
Classroom	21%

Cost for Touring Theater

At this point in the survey educators were told that SMM was thinking of charging \$300 for a 90-minute program, which would include a play and discussion and/or activity related to the show's topic. They were told a second program at the school on the same day would cost \$150. Educators were then asked for their reaction to the cost of the program. More than half of the educators (55%) said the cost was just right, while just under half (45%) said it was too expensive.

Reaction	Percent of Educators
Just right	55%
Too expensive	45%
Too cheap	0%

The 32 educators who said the cost was too expensive were asked for suggestions of a fee that would be more reasonable. Responses were coded into themes and all responses are included for each theme to see the range of suggestions. A little more than a third of educators (35%) said that \$300 would be a reasonable fee under certain circumstances. Some educators provided suggestions of how the program could be altered so \$300 was reasonable, others felt the fee was reasonable but were unsure how they would pay for it. A third of educators (32%) felt that anywhere from \$200 to \$250 was a more reasonable fee. They also provided suggestions for varying amount for a second same-day program. A small percentage (13%) felt that the fee should be under \$200, with a one educator suggesting as low as \$100. There were some educators (16%) who did not suggest a reasonable fee, but discussed concerns about the program content and finding funds to pay for a program.

Suggestions for Fee (n=31)

35% (11) \$300 Under Certain Circumstances

- This was based on the fact that 100 students is too many and that a classroom would be more appropriate. \$300 for 100 students divided into 3 groups would be fine, but \$300 for one classroom of 30 would be too much. I could handle up to \$450 for 3 groups of 35 students each.
- Uncertain. That kind of cost would eliminate the possibility of presenting by classroom. Yet a discussion or activity in a larger group would be ineffective. Perhaps the theater part could be presented in a larger group, i.e. a grade level. Then the 'cast' could do break-out groups by classroom for the discussion or activity. That would also solve the problem of kids having to sit on a gym floor for 90 minutes.
- If you do it as a large group activity, with 150 kids, the cost would be fine. As for a classroom, the cost would be too expensive. 90 minutes may be too long for younger groups to sit. Classroom fee of \$150 for the first group.
- If it were done in the classroom, I cannot feasibly afford that much money. It sounds like a more appropriate amount for a large group performance, but then again, it has to mesh with the curriculum for all grades/classes involved and I may or may not have interest in helping pay for the cost.
- \$300 for the whole program.
- \$300 total....no extra \$150 for a second program. I'm sure this is the cost for what it takes to create a program. It is just more than my school would be willing to take advantage of on a regular basis. \$300 would mean just one performance, maybe every other year.

- It probably is reasonable but I would feel bad if my struggling students would miss out on this opportunity because they did not have the money. And with budget cuts it would be hard for the school to come up with \$300 when a max of 100 students could see it.
- It might be reasonable, I just don't know how I would pay for it.
- I think the price should be based on the effectiveness of the program. If I'm assured the \$300 dollars is worthwhile it is not a problem.
- It isn't the fees but the program topics that would get me to consider whether the program is a good value.

32% (10) \$200 - \$250

- I think we could afford \$200 for a performance.
- About 200.
- \$200
- \$200.00 or grant it out so more schools/classrooms/students could afford it.
- 200-250.00 per 100 students
- \$200, \$75-100 for the second
- I'm not aware of the going rates because I've never been the one to pay for the programs we receive at school. This may be a very appropriate rate compared to others of the same length and quality. I have heard of programs for \$200 - \$250 for a program and \$100 for a second one.
- \$200, and \$100 for each additional program. For me, it depends on how many actors are involved in the play. More actors = more money.
- \$200.00 and \$50.00 for each additional performance in the day. 200-250 although I would use grant money to try to get a program here.
- Our school population is approximately 140 students, K-8, and is considered low income. If the performance was suitable for all grades, then the cost would be quite inexpensive per child. But if a performance were only suitable for certain age groups, then the cost goes up considerably per student. For our school to cover the costs outright, without asking the students to pay, the cost would be considered high, especially if only part of the student body could benefit. Would there be discounts for schools with low-income populations? \$200.00 may be more reasonable.

13% (4) Under \$200

- Well, we have to usually have the students pay for part, if not all of the program. For a classroom, that means we would charge the kids \$10 which is too much. We use programs like MindQuirks that do it for cheaper. \$150-\$200 would be more reasonable.
- I realize you have costs to cover, but just speaking from the standpoint of an educator approaching an administrator with the request, \$150 would be a lot easier to ask for.
- \$100-150
- Cheaper rate for schools with high free and reduced lunch rates. We don't have \$ for anything. 1/2 of what you are asking for.

16% (5) Didn't Specify Fee

- it's hard to say what the cost would be if I don't know the time, materials involved needed for the program to function. I just know as a classroom teacher asking \$300 for a 90 min. program is hard.
- I am not sure since most experiences our school has are free or reduced because of our 95% free and reduced lunch population.
- The program has to be big enough for students to spend \$ to have the program come to them or they would prefer to go out of the building for a field trip. The limit of 100 students in a large

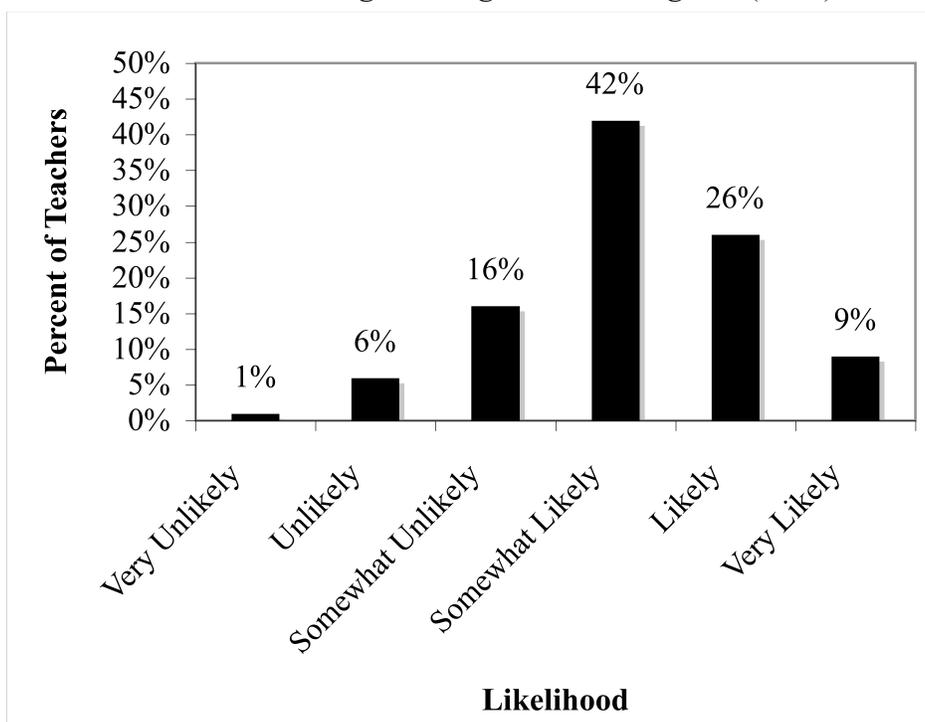
group leaves out larger schools...the cost should be in a range that could be afforded by the science department, as a part of their yearly budget otherwise I don't think schools have discretionary funds that they can spend on a class or two but not the whole grade band.

- Because of our limited budget, we would need to pursue funding from grant sources or other options in order to afford to participate.
- It is hard for me to say, but would all depend on availability of grant money to pay for such a program. Our department has no extra funding for such a thing.

Likelihood of Using Program

Educators were asked, now knowing the potential cost of the program, the likelihood that they would actually use the touring theater program. Three-quarters of educators (77%) said they were somewhat to very likely to use the program, with educators most frequently stating (42%) that they would be somewhat likely to use the program.

Likelihood of Using Touring Theater Program (n=69)



Barriers to Participating In Touring Theater Program

Educators were asked to describe some barriers that might prevent them from using the touring theater program. Responses were coded into themes and representative responses are included for each. Some educators provided more than one barrier. The most frequently mentioned barriers (59%) were related to finding funding to pay for the program. More than a third (39%) cited scheduling barriers, such as fitting the program into their schedule of activities and concerns about the 90-minute length of the program. A little more than a quarter of educators (28%) expressed concern about the program’s content, specifically relevance to their curriculum and appropriateness for various age levels. A little less than a fifth of educators (17%) said the maximum group size would be a barrier for them.

Barriers (n=69)

59% (41) Financial Barriers

- Funding to have the program come to my school.
- Our high school is undergoing major budget cuts. Funds are very limited at this time. There may be some funds through various committees that might make this possible. I would have to check.
- Budget would be the only issue, but since you are coming to us the cost is actually very reasonable since we wouldn't have busing costs. It would be dependent upon my ability to write a grant to cover cost.
- The cost is a reasonable price, but our money is increasingly being diverted to other programming, like preparing for standardized tests.
- Cost is the biggest barrier. Our Parent Teacher Organization is tired of fund-raising and has decided to cut down on fundraisers and become more of an informative and learning type of organization. Previously they helped pay for this type of program.
- Students who are receiving free and reduced lunch can't afford.

39% (27) Scheduling Barriers

- Not enough time in the year. We already have similar groups that come to our school.
- Finding time to include extra curricular activities in addition to the ones already in place could be a problem.
- Other programs might take precedence.
- Lack of time in the curriculum.
- Time – 90 minutes. Our classes are based on seven 50-minute periods.
- 90 minutes seems like a tremendously large block of time for a performance and discussion at elementary.

28% (19) Program Content Barriers

- Making sure that exactly what you offer fits within our curriculum.
- Will the touring theater fit into our curriculum/school/state goals? I think so, but others might disagree.
- I would have to include my team and see how we could integrate the program into all classroom subjects.
- Age/grade level appropriateness. Topic relevance to grade.
- Discussion or activity. Again, discussion is something classroom teachers handle well. Activity, there is the magic bullet. However, I'm not talkin' role-playing here. I'm thinking, "learn science" with hand-on tasks for students to do.

17% (12) Group Size Barriers

- The max of 100 prevents my being able to include this as part of a school-wide program.
- We have 250 students in each grade level so we would need 2+ performances at each grade level. Space is difficult to find for performances in this school.
- The limit of 100 students in a large group. Our 7th grade has 300+ students. Who do I leave out or how do I afford 3 sessions?
- We really like to have a large group presentation with the ability to have small class discussions.

4% (3) Other Barriers

- Good follow-up by teacher.
- I don't make the decision; another person or committee of people do.

Educators were then asked how the museum, their district, or they could address the barriers. Educators provided a variety of ideas, which were coded into themes based on the barriers and representative responses are included for each theme. Ideas for addressing financial barriers included applying for grants, fundraising, scholarships, donations, district funds, cost-sharing with other schools, and asking parents for to pay . To address program content barriers, educators provided a variety of suggestions including ensuring that the content aligns to state standards and districts' curriculum, and providing a variety of programs that would appeal to various group sizes and grade levels. To address scheduling barriers, educators stressed offering programs at various times and days, advertising far enough in advance so they can fit it in their schedule, and possibly offering shorter programs. To address group size barriers, educators stressed being able to present the program to group sizes larger than 100 students.

Suggestions for Addressing Various Barriers

Addressing Financial Barriers

- Making us aware of various grants that we could apply for to cover the costs.
- Grants and/or scholarships from the museum or other sources that would allow the touring shows to visit schools that may not be able to spend very much on these type of things.
- Offer scholarships to schools? Co-author grants?
- I think if money were an issue I think we might be able to apply for a multicultural grant. It sounds like the content lends itself to that.
- Scholarship, donation, or Indian Education could help with the cost, especially if it has to do with race or the environment.
- Our district has desegregation money. If I can justify that the program fits the goals of the Integration office, I may be able to get the funding to bring the program to school.
- I would present the performance as an in-school field trip and students could pay for part of the performance fees.
- Provide a wish list to parents, donors, and interested parties that includes a SMM theater performance, and hope some donations can be made towards the wish. Invite another school to join us and share the cost. Discounts offered to schools in low-income settings.
- Donations by museum members, specifically for inner city schools with high free and reduced lunch rates.

Addressing Program Content Barriers

- If our curriculum and the museum choices were parallel, it would likely happen.
- Look at themes in state standards to help determine topics.
- Could you possibly give the same listing of current productions, then survey a select group of teachers that know curriculum of topics that would especially great for this format?
- It would be neat to see a performance first (for teachers). We put priority on thing that connect with our curriculum, so it depends upon the year.
- Organizing a menu type approach to assemblies. Maybe some topics are great for the entire school to experience but older or younger grade levels would like to explore the topic more in depth. It would be great to tie actual science experiments to the program.

Addressing Scheduling Barriers

- The museum would have to offer a wide variety of times and days. I would need to have enough time to coordinate the performance with our curriculum.
- Timing. Being able to schedule events on early release days or at the end of the testing days.
- Information early on in the school year to make it a priority instead of letting it be pushed aside throughout the year.
- Shorter program time.
- Good PR from you. Good communication with the district from us.

Addressing Group Size Barriers

- Be willing to accommodate more kids at a session.
- Learn to give the presentation to larger groups. (Teachers can tell you how to do this. It won't be easy, but can be done.) You are correct in assuming that the larger the group, the less your effectiveness. That said, it can be done.
- A bigger troupe to do the presentations so you can present to a larger group. The activities could always be break out sessions.
- 100 maximum does not work for large secondary schools, this may be best directed at an elementary audience.

Educator Demographics

Role as an Educator (n=69)

Role	Percent of Educators
Classroom Teacher	83%
Diversity Coordinator	6%
Curriculum Specialist	4%
Other Staff	14%

Grade Taught (n=52)

	Percent of Educators
Preschool	0%
Kindergarten	6%
Grade 1	10%
Grade 2	15%
Grade 3	15%
Grade 4	31%
Grade 5	23%
Grade 6	17%
Grade 7	15%
Grade 8	14%
Grade 9	17%
Grade 10	21%
Grade 11	15%
Grade 12	14%

SMM Touring Theater Program Survey

1. Survey Introduction

The Science Museum of Minnesota (SMM) is exploring the possibility of developing a touring theater program. This program would provide schools with a unique experience combining the science expertise of museum staff with the power and emotion of professional theater. To help us look at the feasibility of this type of program in the Twin Cities metro area, we are asking educators to provide input on various aspects of this potential theater program.

The survey will take approximately 10 - 15 minutes to complete. You can complete this survey over the course of a few days if you'd like, just make sure you use the same computer to access the survey. In appreciation for your time, you will be entered into a drawing for a \$100 Target gift card. To be eligible for the drawing, please complete the survey by Sunday, March 18. Results of this survey will be shared with SMM theater staff, but your individual responses will remain anonymous.

If you have any questions about this survey or theater programs at the museum, please contact me at agnelson@smm.org or 651-221-4575.

Thank you for your time and feedback!
Amy Grack Nelson
SMM Evaluation & Research Associate

2. Sample Theater Programs

SMM would offer a variety of touring theater programs to choose from. The programs would be 90 minutes in length and include both a theater performance and a discussion or activity related to the play's topic. Programs would be available for a variety of ages from preschool to high school. To give you an idea of what types of programs the museum may offer, here are descriptions of some of the theater programs currently performed at the museum.

RACE TO THE FINISH LINE

Two close friends who met in college and share an apartment together, find their friendship begin to fracture as they start to discuss the topic of race. This play should prompt us all to consider how race impacts our lives.

DR. CHARLES DREW

Dr. Charles Drew speaks about his pioneering work with blood plasma and the prejudices he had to face in doing so. He was also the first African American president of the Red Cross. Dr. Drew made the difficult decision to step down from his role as Red Cross president after the government issued a mandate ordering the separation of blood according to race.

ELIZABETH BLACKWELL

The first female doctor of modern times speaks about her struggle to obtain a medical education.

POLAR BEAR JOURNEY

Take an imaginary trip to the Arctic Circle and meet a polar bear puppet and her two playful cubs.

PUMPKIN CHILD

Hear a folktale from Iran about an old woman who has no time for bullies and a pumpkin with a delightful secret.

SMM Touring Theater Program Survey

*** 1. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is "not at all interested" and 10 is "extremely interested", how interested would you be in bringing a SMM theater program to your school? (For this question, imagine that cost is not an issue.)**

- 1 - Not at all Interested 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 - Extremely Interested

2. Please explain why you would or would not be interested in using the touring theater program.

3. Audience for Touring Theater Programs

The following questions are about the audience of a touring theater program. For these two questions, answer them as though the cost of the program is not an issue for you.

*** 3. What grade or grades would you be interested in participating in a touring theater program?**

- Preschool
- Kindergarten
- Grade 1
- Grade 2
- Grade 3
- Grade 4
- Grade 5
- Grade 6
- Grade 7
- Grade 8
- Grade 9
- Grade 10
- Grade 11
- Grade 12

SMM Touring Theater Program Survey

*** 4. Would you prefer to use the theater program with a large group (maximum of 100 students) or a classroom?**

- Large group (max. of 100 students)
- Classroom
- No preference, would be interested in both

4. Cost for Touring Theater

*** 5. We are thinking of charging \$300 for a 90 minute program. The program would include a play and then a discussion and/or activity related to the show's topic. A second program at the school on the same day would cost \$150.**

What is your reaction to the cost of this program?

- Too expensive
- Just right
- Too cheap

5. Cost for Touring Theater (cont.)

6. You said you felt charging \$300 for a 90 minute program and \$150 for a second same day program was too expensive. What do you feel would be a reasonable fee for this program?

6. Likelihood of Using Program

SMM Touring Theater Program Survey

*** 7. As stated earlier, the 90 minute program would include a theater performance and a discussion and/or activity related to the show's topic. The potential cost of the program would be \$300. Regardless of your previously stated interest in the program, what is the likelihood that you would actually use the touring theater program?**

- Very Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Somewhat Unlikely
- Somewhat Likely
- Likely
- Very Likely

*** 8. What are some barriers that might prevent you from using the touring theater program?**

9. How can those barriers be addressed by the museum, yourself, and/or your school district?

7. A Little Bit About Yourself

The final questions are about you and your involvement in SMM educational activities.

SMM Touring Theater Program Survey

*** 10. As an educator, how have you been involved with SMM educational programs and activities in the past? (check all that apply)**

- Brought class to SMM on a field trip
- Rented a museum trunk
- SMM Assembly/Lyceum at your school
- One to five day SMM Residency at your school
- Attended a SMM Teacher Workshop or Institute
- Participated in an Educator Exhibit preview at SMM
- Signed up for Bog Hopper enewsletter
- Have not been involved in any SMM educational programs and activities in the past
- Other (please explain)

*** 11. How would describe your role as an educator? (Check all that apply)**

- Teacher
- Principal
- Superintendent
- Other (please specify)

*** 12. What school district do you work for? (Include the school district name and number)**

8. A Little Bit About Yourself (cont.)

SMM Touring Theater Program Survey

* 13. What grade or grades do you teach? (Check all that apply)

- Preschool
- Kindergarten
- Grade 1
- Grade 2
- Grade 3
- Grade 4
- Grade 5
- Grade 6
- Grade 7
- Grade 8
- Grade 9
- Grade 10
- Grade 11
- Grade 12

9. Thank You!

Thank you again for your time and feedback! In appreciation for your time we'd like to enter your name into a drawing for a \$100 Target Gift card.

14. Please indicate where we can send the \$100 Target gift card if your name is chosen.

Name

Address

City, State, Zip

15. Would you be interested in participating in future surveys or interviews about potential SMM touring theater programs?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

10. Submit Survey

Thank you for your time in completing this survey. Click "Done" below to submit your survey.