Dear Principal or Head of School,

We at the Fort Wayne Museum of Art would like to invite your students to visit the art museum this academic year. Thanks to a generous donation from the Lincoln Financial Foundation, public and private schools in the following counties receive free admission for docent-led tours: Allen, DeKalb, Huntington, Kosciusko, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben, Wells, and Whitley. Museum tours offer interdisciplinary learning experiences that meet both the revised Indiana Academic Standards for Fine Arts and the National and State Visual Arts Standards while also integrating important English and Literacy skills as students discuss, analyze, and interpret artworks.

A recent, large-scale impact study conducted by the National Art Education Association (NAEA) and the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) found that students who participate in a facilitated single-visit art museum program experience a variety of educational benefits. The attached document provides a detailed overview of the study and its findings in the following key competencies with cross-curricular academic connections:

- Creative Thinking (Questioning): Students ask more complex questions about works of art
- Sensorial and Affective Responses (Physicality of Art): Students are more likely to think of art in terms of its material properties
- Critical Thinking (Multiple Interpretations): Students are able to practice listening and respectful debate, resulting in greater acceptance of multiple interpretations of a work of art
- Human Connections (Emotive Recall): Students experience greater emotive recall, as multisensory experiences activate neural systems that result in rich memories

While technology has made viewing artworks in the classroom easily accessible, we maintain that there is no alternative to experiencing art in person. Only in person can visitors understand the true scale, color, depth, and vision of the artist’s work. By allowing students to look closely, share ideas, and discover personal connections, field trips inspire and foster students’ creativity and curiosity.

Art museums are inclusive spaces, and we endeavor to extend authentic art experiences to all schools and grade levels. We understand, however, that field trips are not always an option and encourage you to look into Gallery on Wheels, our program that brings the art museum to your school! Using works of art from the collection and beyond, we have curated a list of collections that integrate interdisciplinary presentations with object-based learning and visual thinking strategies to aid student’s critical thinking, analysis, and interpretation skills.

Information about programs and resources is available online at fwmoa.org/PreK-12. Arrange a program by calling or emailing Katy Thompson at 260.422.6467 or kathy.thompson@fwmoa.org.

Warm Regards,

Charles A. Shepard III, President and CEO
PARTNERS: National Art Education Association (NAEA), Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD), and Randi Korn & Associates (RK&A). Support provided by a National Leadership Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and the Samuel H. Kress Foundation.

RESEARCH QUESTION: What are the benefits of facilitated single-visit art museum programs, guided by inquiry-based pedagogies, on students in grades 4–6?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS: Though short in duration, facilitated single-visit art museum programs affect students in complex, multidimensional ways. There is not one direct effect; rather, there are potentially multiple, interrelated effects that are central to the education of young people.

RESEARCH METHOD: A quasi-experimental research design included three study groups: Treatment A participants experienced original works of art during a facilitated single-visit program in an art museum; Treatment B participants experienced reproductions in a facilitated program in a school classroom; and the Control Group did not receive any intervention.

INQUIRY-BASED TEACHING: A trained museum representative (volunteer docent or staff) asks open-ended questions; allows group dialogue to evolve in response to students’ comments and questions; provides opportunities for students to consider different ideas; and encourages close looking and evidential reasoning.

RESULTS

What are the results of a facilitated single-visit art museum program on students in grades 4-6?

KEY FINDINGS: A facilitated single-visit program in an art museum affects students in grades 4–6 in four ways:

- questioning
- multiple interpretations
- physicality of art
- emotive recall

STUDENT CAPACITIES: The NAEA and AAMD team chose to focus this research on five capacities:

- creative thinking
- critical thinking
- sensorial and affective responses
- human connections
- academic connections
One Visit Works! Facilitated Single-Visit Art Museum Programs Demonstrate Learning Gains | Fast Facts for Art/Classroom Teachers & School Administrators

KEY FINDINGS:

● QUESTIONING: Students ask more complex questions about works of art.
  A facilitated single-visit art museum program can spark curiosity and encourage higher-level inquiry. As students formulate questions, they observe and practice critical thinking and communication skills. Inquiry-based approaches and small-group dialogues activate collaborative learning and demonstrate how questions become tools that surface meaning.

● MULTIPLE INTERPRETATIONS: Students are more accepting of multiple interpretations of a work of art.
  A facilitated single-visit art museum program can encourage students to practice listening and respectful debate. Multiple interpretations of art objects can promote broader understanding of people and ideas. Communication and collaboration can serve to open young minds.

● PHYSICALITY OF ART: Students are more likely to think about works of art in terms of their material properties.
  Little compares to experiencing works of art in a museum. Seeing original artworks and participating in a facilitated art museum program engage the senses, hold students’ attention, and stimulate questions about artists’ choices and creative processes.

● EMOTIVE RECALL: Students experience greater emotive recall of the program.
  The emotional impact of firsthand encounters with works of art in a museum setting can inspire greater recall and more detailed description, which can lead to complex interpretations. Multisensory experiences activate neural systems that result in rich and durable memories.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

● This study, implemented on a national scale, is intended to offer findings that are generalizable to the field at large. These results should encourage classroom teachers and school administrators to advocate for and enable equitable access to facilitated single-visit art museum programs to ensure greater learning impact for all student populations.

● School teachers and administrators can use this study’s findings to talk about the specific capacities that students exercise during a facilitated single-visit art museum program. Teachers can use these data as evidence that museum visits are integral to their academic curriculum.

CONCLUSION:

Facilitated single-visit art museum programs, using inquiry-based pedagogies, provide unique opportunities for students to engage with original works of art in a different learning environment. This study shows that engaging with original works of art in an art museum has a stronger impact on students than looking at reproductions in two areas—emotive recall and physicality of art. By allowing students to look closely, share ideas, and discover personal connections, facilitated single-visit art museum programs inspire and foster students’ creativity and curiosity. Practicing these skills across a variety of learning environments can contribute to meaningful cognitive gains. The results of this study help validate that the work of museums is important and impactful to student learning and skill development. School teachers and administrators should feel empowered to champion facilitated single-visit art museum programs by citing the specific benefits measured in this study.