

SAN JOSE
MUSEUM
OF ART

PEER TO PEER

A positive, objective approach to docent peer support

WHY A PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM?

- Develop more professional skills
- Standardize tour evaluations
- Instill pride and accountability
- Create a more consistent visitor experience

CHALLENGES

- Fear of change
- Perception of being judged
- Evaluators' discomfort with their role
- Need for consistent platform for objective evaluations

SAN JOSE MUSEUM OF ART AT A GLANCE

- Contemporary art museum
- Inquiry-based tours
- Focus on visitors' experiential investigation of the art
- “Script” changes every tour

...how do you apply a metric to something so subjective?

HOW THIS ALL WORKS
IN PRACTICE



WHAT HAPPENED HERE?

PEER SUPPORT CHECKLIST

- Tool for standardizing tour components
 - ...Our objective criteria for an inherently subjective process
- Key focus areas
 - ...Are the visitors allowed time to look and form opinions?
 - ...Is the docent using inquiry-based touring techniques?
 - ...Does the docent refrain from personal bias or lecturing?

POST-TOUR DEBRIEFING

- Five questions asked of docent and support team
- Questions parallel inquiry-based touring method
- One docent acts as facilitator
- One docent acts as team scribe
- All team members deliver feedback in a constructive way

SUPPORT SESSION FINDINGS

- Summarized in post-session email to docent
- Reviewed with education curator
- Trends addressed in continuing education workshops and trainings
- Program continues to evolve

OUR PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM TODAY

- Docent run
- Peer support team format used
- Team approach allows group learning, reduces hierarchy
- Team chair appointed for 2-year term
- Team members rotate annually

KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Be transparent — no surprises, for anyone
- Spend necessary time for self-assessment by participants
- Reflect your institution's values
- Develop standards with input from docents and staff
- Encourage and reassure docents throughout the process

MAKE THE PROCESS A HOLISTIC ONE

- Use principles consistently to weave into your group's DNA
- Maximize opportunities for reinforcement
- Imbed peer support in trainings, briefings, continuing education
- Design shift reports and other forms to aid self-reflection
- Recruit new docents with affinity for collaboration, openness

YOUR NEXT STEPS

- Make sure there's a need and a strong desire to do it
- Design your standards to fit your institutional needs
- Build docent leadership and staff support to champion the process
- Be realistic about the time and effort required
- Start the conversation!

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Visit sanjosemuseumofart.org/nds2011

for our Peer Support Starter Kit, which includes a peer support checklist, our basic standards for docents, evaluation forms, debriefing and followup documents, and more.

Thanks for your participation!