

“That museums should serve school audiences is beyond question. Formal and informal educational environments—schools and museums—should serve as the yin and yang of learning in a healthy community: equally necessary for education of the whole person.”

(Garcia, Murawski, and Cordova, 2012)

Dear Administrator,

The Musical Instrument Museum sees educators not only as leaders in our community, but as our partners in shaping young minds. A well-rounded education includes a combination of formal classroom instruction and informal cultural experiences. Like fieldwork in the natural sciences, field trips to arts and cultural institutions provide unique educational advantages that cannot be easily recreated in the classroom or virtually. As Garcia, Murawski, and Cordova teach us, formal and informal education environments are “complementary and equally significant in lifelong learning” (2012). Surveys even suggest that cultural institutions, such as museums, are perceived as more trusted resources for historical content than some classrooms (Rohlf, 2015).

About 14% of Arizona’s 1.12 million K–12 students lack any arts program in their schools, and only 57% of schools offer both music and visual arts courses (AZ Arts Ed Project, 2022–23). The National Endowment for the Arts detailed its findings from a study of children and youth populations from 2001–2018 examining outcomes related to arts access and participation among early childhood, elementary, and high school students. The findings suggest that access to arts education and experiences directly support positive academic and cognitive outcomes and positive social-emotional attributes. These benefits of arts education would be unavailable to many youths in our community without visits to arts and culture institutions such as MIM.

MIM CONTENT

Every MIM field trip integrates free-choice learning with audiovisual technology, hands-on experiences, age-appropriate questioning techniques, and cultural education throughout the entirety of the experience. Multicultural education, student heritage connections, and curricular ties to core content in history and ELA are easily identified in all MIM field trip types. The most popular field trip type, the STEM field trip, offers a unique approach to bringing complex STEM concepts to life for kids.

At MIM, STEM learning is fun and relatable, and it happens through a multicultural lens, with great appreciation for the world’s people and cultures. The 2021 report *Call to Action for Science Education* found that classrooms devote less instruction time to science than for other subjects—only 20 minutes per day compared to 90 minutes for ELA and 60 minutes for math. A STEM field trip is an excellent way to provide additional science, technology, engineering, and math learning in an informal setting that is also connected to music and the arts. A Johns Hopkins study found that teaching science through arts integration is “as effective as or better than conventional science instruction in increasing long-term memory for students’ science content knowledge” (Hardiman, et al., 2019).

EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVES

Music offers a gateway into understanding people, places, and ideas, and it helps children celebrate their own cultures as well as those of others, addressing a need for experiences that build cultural understanding in our schools. After student field trips, MIM requests and applies educator feedback to ensure that students and teachers achieve their desired outcomes.

“Many of our students aren’t exposed to the type of culture promoted at MIM,” commented a teacher.

“I really appreciate teaching about cultures in the process of learning about instruments and music,” another teacher shared. “It’s really beautiful and a critical element in fostering that sense of connectedness with people and cultures around the world.”

By introducing children to diverse musical cultures and artists, MIM’s programs also respond to the critical need to expand the range of cultures represented in educational content offered by museums and cultural institutions.

We ask teachers to share their desired student learning outcomes for their field trip. The most common responses include introduction to world cultures different from their own, appreciation for diversity, and inspiration to wonder, ask questions, and practice critical thinking skills. The word cloud above reflects the most common responses from educators about what their students gained from their field trip experience over the past two school years (2023–2024 and 2024–2025).



CONCLUSIONS

Whether attending a STEM field trip or one of our many other field trip tour options—all of which align with Arizona’s early learning and K–12 academic standards—students participate in a cultural arts experience that cannot be captured in a traditional classroom. As your educational partner, MIM field trips support a well-rounded education. Students who consistently have access to arts education demonstrate higher academic, cognitive, and social-emotional achievement and attributes throughout the preK–12 spectrum. The value of MIM’s content in supporting teachers’ classroom curriculum is highly supported by teachers’ direct feedback, with more than 98% of respondents sharing that they would recommend the experience to others.

Please visit [MIM.org/field-trips/](https://mim.org/field-trips/) for a detailed list of state standards addressed in each of our field trips, and reach out to GroupTours@MIM.org with questions.

We look forward to seeing you soon!
MIM Education