How to Keep the Ball in Your Court

Jennifer Gray - SMA 2024
Museums are Magic

Born 1988 (why am I mentioning my age?)

The Only C

Arcadia University

BA, History (2010)

M.Ed, Early Childhood Education (2021)
Eastern State Penitentiary (2013)

Historic Philadelphia Inc. (2011-2021)

Dickens’ Village (2012-2019)

Betsy Ross (2015-2021)

Liberty Hall Museum & Gardens (2020-2022)

Arch Street Meeting House (2021-present)

Teach (2021-present)
Teaching in Museums vs. Teaching in the Classroom

Time and content

History is:

- Fun for All
- The Good and the Bad

In having difficult discussions, you contend with:

- Bias
- Violence
- Cruelty
- Anger
- Ignorance
- The Board
- The Public
PEST Analysis

Bronfenbrenner
PEST

Political

Economic

Socio-Cultural

Technological

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park

Museum: Reading an Old Building
Political, Economic, Socio-Cultural, Technological

Are they accessible to those with physical limitations/mobility issues?

PEST

Are they environmentally friendly?

PEST

Are they accessible to those who are non-binary?

PES

Are they newly renovated?

ET
Small Group Activity

1. 8-10 groups
2. Each group will receive a potentially contentious topic
3. How can you use the PEST Analysis to dissect your topic?
4. Try to get 1 comment per PEST
5. Select 1 person to share out
Betsy Ross

Betsy, do you own slaves?

P - While slavery is legal here...
E - I am not a wealthy woman...
S - Having been raised a Quaker...
T - I perform skilled labor...

Let’s talk about 21st century politics!

Betsy Ross House 2016
De-escalation
Historic RichmondTown 2023
Politics through time

Arch Street

Yes, Quakers owned slaves

The Black Bench
Christian Slavery

P - Bronfenbrenner
E - Status symbol
S - The elders
T - North vs. South
Hurdles to Overcome

“Easier” sites, people, locations, etc.

Supervision & training

Staff/docent/volunteer age

Antagonistic visitors
Blocking Blame

● **Direct Blocking**: Signaling that the purpose of the interaction is not to blame (We’re not here to...)

● **Reframing**: Providing an alternate point of view about a set of facts, which gives the facts a more positive, productive meaning (It sounds as if...)

● **Probing**: Eliciting additional information to clarify the context leading to the blaming (Why do you think that?)

● **Refocusing**: A statement that redirects the discussion from a nonproductive or nonessential area to a relevant area that is helpful.

● **Illustrating**: Giving concrete examples.

● **Validating**: Recognizing the validity of another’s perceptions or efforts.

● **Agreeing**: Confirming someone’s perception of a situation.
Blocking Blame as Betsy Ross

- **Direct Blocking:** “I do hope you remember that there are young ones who visit me.”
- **Reframing:** “I do not have the space nor the time to make the fabric. I conducted an apprenticeship for 6 years to learn the upholstery trade...”
- **Probing:** “Why do you think that?”
- **Refocusing:** “Fabric is incredibly expensive.” “How good are your sewing skills?” “Philadelphia is the largest city within these colonies.”
- **Illustrating:** Upholsterers make flags; May 1777 receipt.
- **Validating:** “I can see where you would think that because there is no record on paper, the story is false.”
- **Agreeing:** “Yes I do have my own business. As Philadelphia is a bustling epicenter, things may be different if you are from a less-populous area.”
Blocking Blame at the Mütter Museum

Are human remains an object in a collection?
Should there be warnings or waivers?
Should certain things not be on display?
Is there a difference between current and past (remember Bronfenbrenner)?
Does the method of acquisition matter?
Do you get grandfathered in?
Jennifer Gray

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