

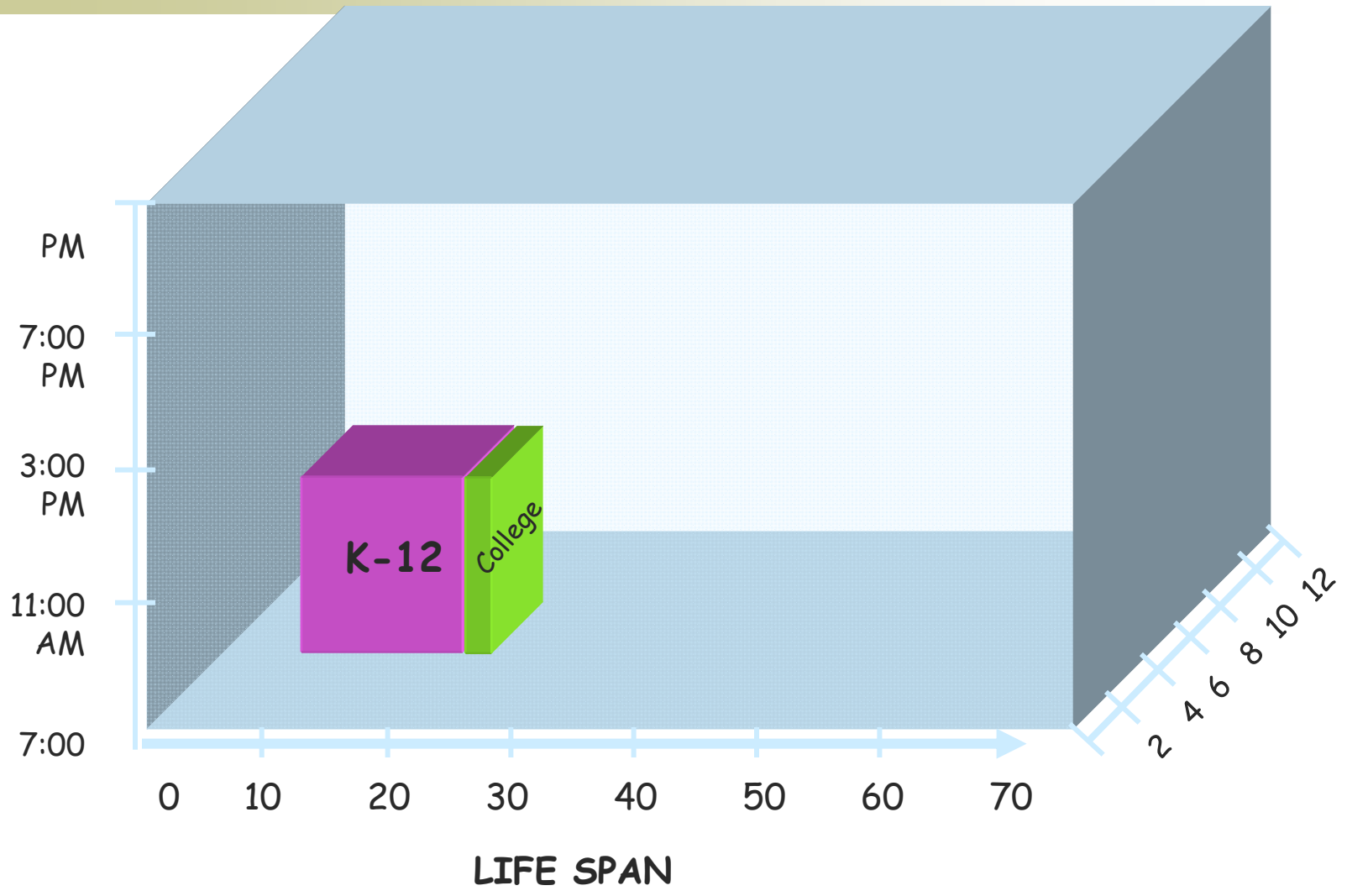
Family Learning Laughing & Learning*

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Framing Family Learning Broadly

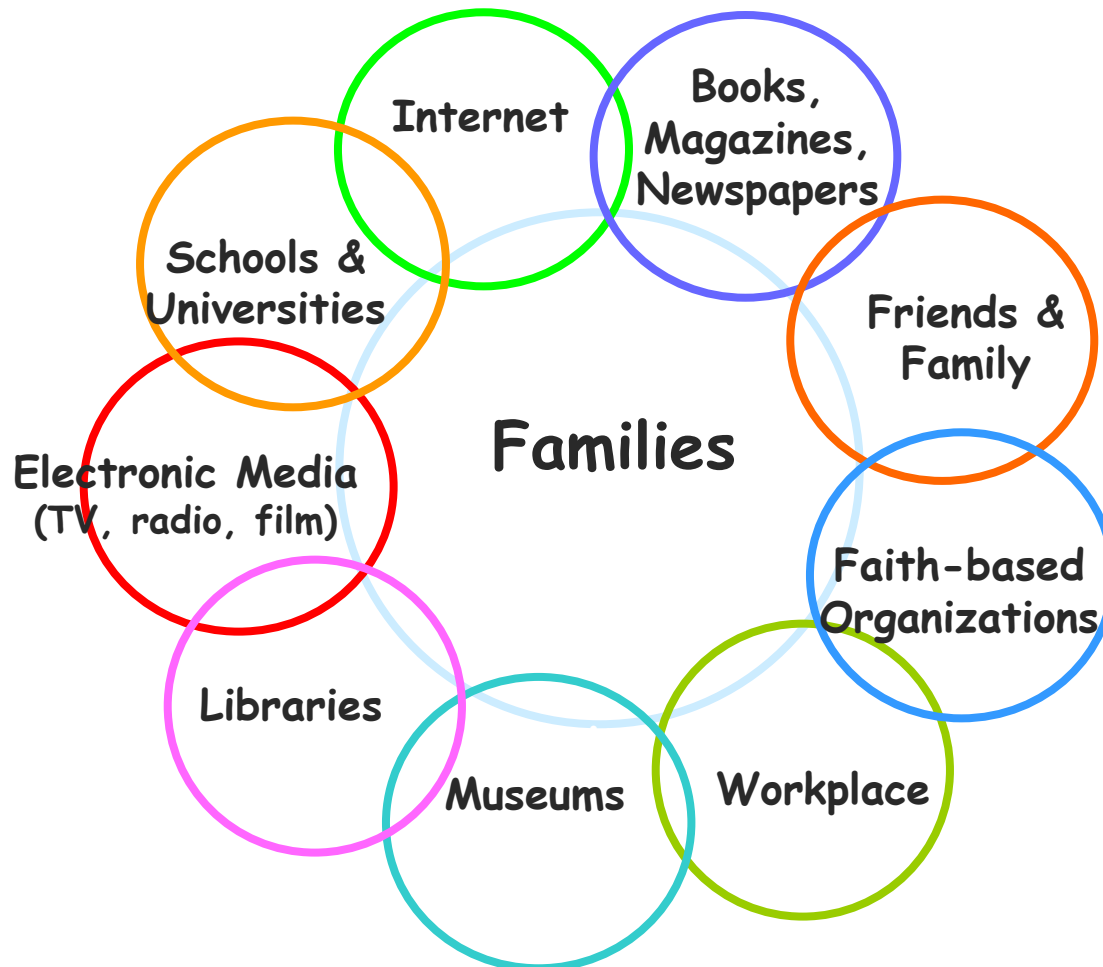
- We live in a Learning Society
- Learning is 24 - 7 - 52 - 80+
- Learning is rapidly becoming number one industry & leisure activity



What is Family Learning?

- Special form of free-choice learning; way families reinforce social history & identity
- Family members bring shared background & knowledge
- Members understand each other's learning styles, strengths & weaknesses

Learning Infrastructure



Why is It Important?

- First & foremost learning institution
- Largest percentage of visitors; most arrive in family groups seeking a family activity
- Visiting museums as a child with one's family correlates with adult use
- What happens in the home & community is critical to a person's success
- Specifically: where children learn to be lifelong learners & lovers of history

Theoretical Underpinnings

- Socio-cultural; learning constructed & shared within socio-cultural/physical contexts
- Learning at most basic level is identity-building
- Families use museums to reinforce /enact their identity; it's about them-not us/you!!

What Does It Look Like?

- Occurs within contexts that families find appropriate & engaging
- Involves social interaction
- Families talk, collaborate & construct *own* experience
- In doing so, make meaning by working & solving problems together
- Is enjoyable & fun—
“laughing & learning”



Specific Family Learning Impacts for Children

- **Perspective & Awareness**
 - Self-confidence
 - Independence & autonomy
 - Attitudes & perspectives on learning
- **Social Development**
 - Interacting with others—peers & adults
- **Interests**
 - Personal interests
- **Knowledge & Skills**
 - Personal knowledge & skills outside of school

Specific Family Learning Impacts for Adults

- Perspective & Awareness
 - Enriched perception of importance of supporting child's (& their own!) learning
- Social Development
 - Enhanced sense of sharing time together
- Interests
 - Increased awareness & appreciation for child's (& their own!) interest, curiosity & creativity
- Knowledge & Skills
 - Boosted confidence, interest & understanding of how to support learning of child (& them!)

Two Students' Work

■ Scott Pattison

- Works at Oregon Museum of Science & Industry (OMSI)
- Master project investigates informal interactions between staff & families

■ Jennifer Bachman

- Completing Ph.D. on home-educating families
- Sub-study (What home-educators want museums to know about them)

OMSI Study

- Conducted in two exhibitions
 - Chemistry Lab
 - Physics Lab
- Findings
 - Role negotiation between staff-family is critical, particularly family facilitator
 - Primary family facilitator (often adult) gatekeeper to staff; if ignored or partially acknowledged interactions brief & even contested; only effective if family facilitator fully acknowledges & reinforces staff

Home-Education Study

- Treat as equals (parents are capable teachers & co-learners)
- Want extended experiences (pre-post resources, connect to other museums / libraries, community service)
- Age does not connote "grade" level
- Enjoy complexity--don't dumb down
- Special experiences important--meet a curator, researcher, exhibit designer, peek behind scenes
- Affordability/access for rural families