

GENIAL: GENERATING ENGAGEMENT AND NEW INITIATIVES FOR ALL LATINOS BY THE EXPLORATORIUM GENIAL TEAM.

Learning from a two-day conference to best support Latinx students in informal science environments. Organizations must take risks beyond their status quo, which includes better supporting diverse staff members serving students in informal environments.

This summary of a much longer detailed report outlines key learnings from a two-day conference in San Francisco focused on Latinx participation in informal science learning (ISL). Ninety-one persons—practitioners, community leaders, media specialists, government officials, policy professionals and researchers from all parts of the U.S. including Puerto Rico—participated.

Four goals of the Summit were:

- Identify needs and opportunities for Latinos in ISL environments
- Facilitate and strengthen professional relationships
- Identity recommendations, emerging research questions, and actionable insights
- Contribute to a more informed ISL field.

The work was divided into five clear strands, or themes, each of which crossed the boundaries between them. In this sense, the Summit was an experience of weaving the threads to create a new more integrated movement.

- Latinx audiences (understanding the nuanced diversity of Latino audiences)
- Marketing, Communications, and Media (role of marketing communications in connecting Latino audiences with STEAM—Science Technology Engineering Arts Math)
- Community Collaboration and Empowerment (design programming with, as opposed to imposing it on, Latinx communities)
- Organizational Change (how does a mainstream organization create inclusive organizational systems?)
- Relevant STEAM Experiences (not one size fits all)

There was much attention paid to the diversity within the larger Latinx community/communities. This includes an awareness of the power dynamics within institutions seeking to serve the community. The use of Spanish language media, a powerful presence in the community, was pointed to as a way to build relationships. Building trust, respect, and relationships must be at the center of this work, a process that is long-term.

Collaborative thinking and behavior, overcoming typical practices of experts talking down to others and understanding the process as co-creating, are essential. Some practices that can guide this process include actively seeking the knowledge base of the audience through every phase of the work and recognizing power dynamics within the professional organization.

None of this can happen without risk-taking within the institution, and that is helped by reframing “failure” as a positive part of the learning experience.

It is good when non-diverse institutions hire more diverse staff, but those colleagues require support. Further, assigning them all the engagement with Latinx audiences perpetuates the larger institutional problem. The larger goal is developing more Latinx leaders in all professional segments.

Participants developed a list of action items going forward which include:

- Address issues in existing power structures
- Work internally to promote the value of engaging Latinx communities
- Engage in sustainability planning
- Increase board and staff diversity
- Support and empower staff to engage Latinx audiences

- Embrace risk-taking
- Emphasize parent and community involvement
- Develop a deep-listening capacity in and out of the institution

Exploratorium GENIAL Team. (2017). “GENIAL: Generating Engagement and New Initiatives for all Latinos.” Genial Summit. PDF.

https://www.exploratorium.edu/sites/default/files/Genial_2017_Summit_Report_Summary.pdf



Thanks to generous support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, *Our Neighborhood*, is a compilation of stories and research from the family engagement field. It is intended to be a living repository and guide for STEM Learning Ecosystems and other communities interested in cultivating strong community partnerships to prepare the next generation.

This annotated bibliography was compiled by TIES for *Our Neighborhood*.