



APPROVED Minutes
Education Committee
2500 West Broad Street

October 16, 2025
1:30 p.m.

Present: Dr. Denise Walters, Gina Burgin, Patricia Nicoson, Ram Venkatachalam, Jeff Bentley, Thomas Gottwald, Dr. Robert Winn, Fran Bradford, Elsa Falls, John Ivins, Karey Malysko,

Staff Present: Timshel Purdum, Rich Conti, Dr. Rose Basom, Ash Harris, Courtney Moyer, Maggie Gercken, AJ Chrapliwy, Ada Sue Siler

Other Attendees: Lauren Coleman, Office of the Attorney General; JC. La Riviere, Office of the Attorney General

Dr. Walters called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m.

Welcome and Approval of Minutes

Dr. Walters welcomed the attendees to the meeting and commented that this will be her final as chair of the Education Committee.

Dr. Walters asked for any comments or corrections for the June 18, 2025 meeting minutes. No discussion heard. Ms. Nicoson called a motion to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Falls and followed by a verbal vote. All voted in favor to approve the minutes, none opposed. Motion carried.

Inspiration Index

Ms. Purdum presented the Inspiration Index and provided an overview of summer engagement and programming highlights.

- The Science Museum experienced a strong summer season, with *Ultimate Dinosaurs* marking the most well-attended exhibition in Dewey Gottwald Space history.
- Ms. Purdum emphasized that dinosaurs serve as a gateway to science, helping visitors understand that science is a process — one that extends beyond facts.
- The Science on Tap series achieved record attendance, further supporting the museum’s mission to serve as an engaging science agency for all Virginians.
- The Virginia Lottery sponsored the Teacher Open House, which was well attended.
- The museum continues to collaborate with community partners at events to strengthen outreach and engagement.

Partnership highlights include:

- Ongoing collaboration with LEGO (now entering its third year) on educational projects, with discussions underway for future partnerships.
- A new partnership with the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired, focused on accessibility in the Makerspace and development of STEM kits.
- Continuation of Sunrise Science, a popular and growing early morning education program.
- Success in outreach initiatives such as Science Within Reach and the summer intern program, both of which are thriving.

Exhibits

- *Towers of Tomorrow* and *Ultimate Dinosaurs* were deinstalled, and *Power of Poison* was installed.
- A permanent Spinosaurus skull cast was added to the collection.
- The Speed Gallery refresh RFP was issued to top national design-build firms.
- The Northern Mockingbird sculpture received Art and Architectural Review Board approval in September 2025.
- The Science Museum opened a new Galleria exhibition, “Felling, UK: Artworks by Dawn Felicia Knox.”

Science Content and Research

- A.J. Chrapliwy joined as Registrar and Collections Specialist; Milijana Stojanovikj joined as a Bonner Scholar from the University of Richmond.

- Developed content for the Speed Gallery improvement project.
- Began releasing VA250 “Then and Now” media content in July — 12 written pieces, 3 already published and shared with science teachers statewide.
- The Arthur Ashe tennis racquet on display in the Speed Gallery was returned to the International Tennis Hall of Fame and replaced with an alternative racquet.
- Content development continues for the Flow and Helios galleries at the Northern Virginia Science Center.

Annual Program Updates

The Forge

- Extended operating hours.
- 31,352 guests participated in Maker Challenges.
- 2,824 guests participated in Maker Workshops.
- 12 new challenges and 24 new workshops were launched, along with 7 community group projects.

The Mix

- 531 members participated in 17 events and workshops during the school year and 13 weeks of summer programming.
- Programs continue to emphasize interactivity and accessible, often free, STEM experiences for guests.

Science Within Reach

- The Museums for All program reached 38,886 guests.
- Library Pass Program is up and running in 5 library systems, 1,129 guests have participated.
- Community Outreach has achieved 9,643 points of contact.
- Minds of All Kinds has seen 4,095 guests since FY2017.
- Senior Programming has impacted 320 guests, 9 programs last year, with increased funding and frequency for the upcoming year.

Schools and Groups

- 72,318 school and group guests visited Broad Street Station. 20,358 participated in Live Science programs, and 29,358 attended Dome features.
- 16% of all school programs were supported by grants and donations.
- The museum continues working toward its goal to host every Title I school within an hour's drive for free field trips.

Summer Camps

- 9 weeks of programming, 530 children, and 62 scholarships provided.
- Net revenue reached \$99,895.

Volunteers and Interns

- 14,459 volunteer hours, a 21% increase over FY24.
- Teen Leadership Program: 2 semesters, 26 teens, 1,820 hours.
- Group and Event Volunteers worked 44 events, 466 volunteers, 2,986 hours.
- The Science Museum hosted 7 paid college interns (1,817 hours) and 9 high school interns (from *Girls for Change*, *Partnership for the Future*, *Down Syndrome Association*, and *Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired*).
- The Foundation continues to fundraise actively to sustain these internship programs.

Mr. Venkatachalam highlighted the Amazon “Girls in Tech” Day, emphasizing the importance of supporting women in STEM.

Ms. Falls asked about the college internship program, and Ms. Purdum confirmed that the Foundation raises dedicated funds to support these paid opportunities across multiple departments, including horticulture, communications, special events, administration, and digitization.

Interpretive Plan

Dr. Rose Basom presented an update on the Science Museum’s new interpretive plan, first introduced the previous year.

- The plan organizes interpretation around broad thematic “buckets” designed to deepen public inspiration for science.
- The approach provides a flexible framework focused on helping Virginians thrive, connecting innovation, research, and everyday life.

- Rather than emphasizing specific scientific topics, the Thrive framework draws from core content priorities to demonstrate how science enables human progress.
- Social media initiatives reflect this direction, including posts on food and science, the science of happiness, and math in daily life.
- The team’s next step is to develop new growth strategies based on two goals:
 1. Illuminate the scientific process.
 2. Demonstrate the relevance and impact of basic scientific research.
- Dr. Basom emphasized that storytelling will remain central — personal, emotional narratives make science more meaningful.

Upcoming Programs and Events

Ms. Purdum reviewed the upcoming programming schedule:

Date	Event
Oct. 17	<i>Science After Dark: Spooky Science</i>
Nov. 6	<i>Laser Show: The Beatles</i>
Nov. 7	<i>Sunrise Science</i>
Nov. 15	<i>Girls in Science Camp-In</i>
Nov. 21	<i>Minds of All Kinds</i>
Nov. 28–30	<i>Model Railroad Show</i>
Dec. 6	<i>Holiday Parade</i>
Dec. 12	<i>Laser Show: Lady Gaga</i>
Dec. 17	<i>Senior Morning</i>
Jan. 15	<i>Laser Show: Led Zeppelin</i>
Jan. 16	<i>Private Camp-In</i>

New Business

Dr. Walters asked for any new business. None heard.

Adjournment

Dr. Walters called for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Mr. Venkatachalam, seconded by Dr. Winn, and approved by unanimous verbal vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:58 p.m., followed by a tour of the *Power of Poison* exhibition.

The Education Committee will meet again on January 22, 2026